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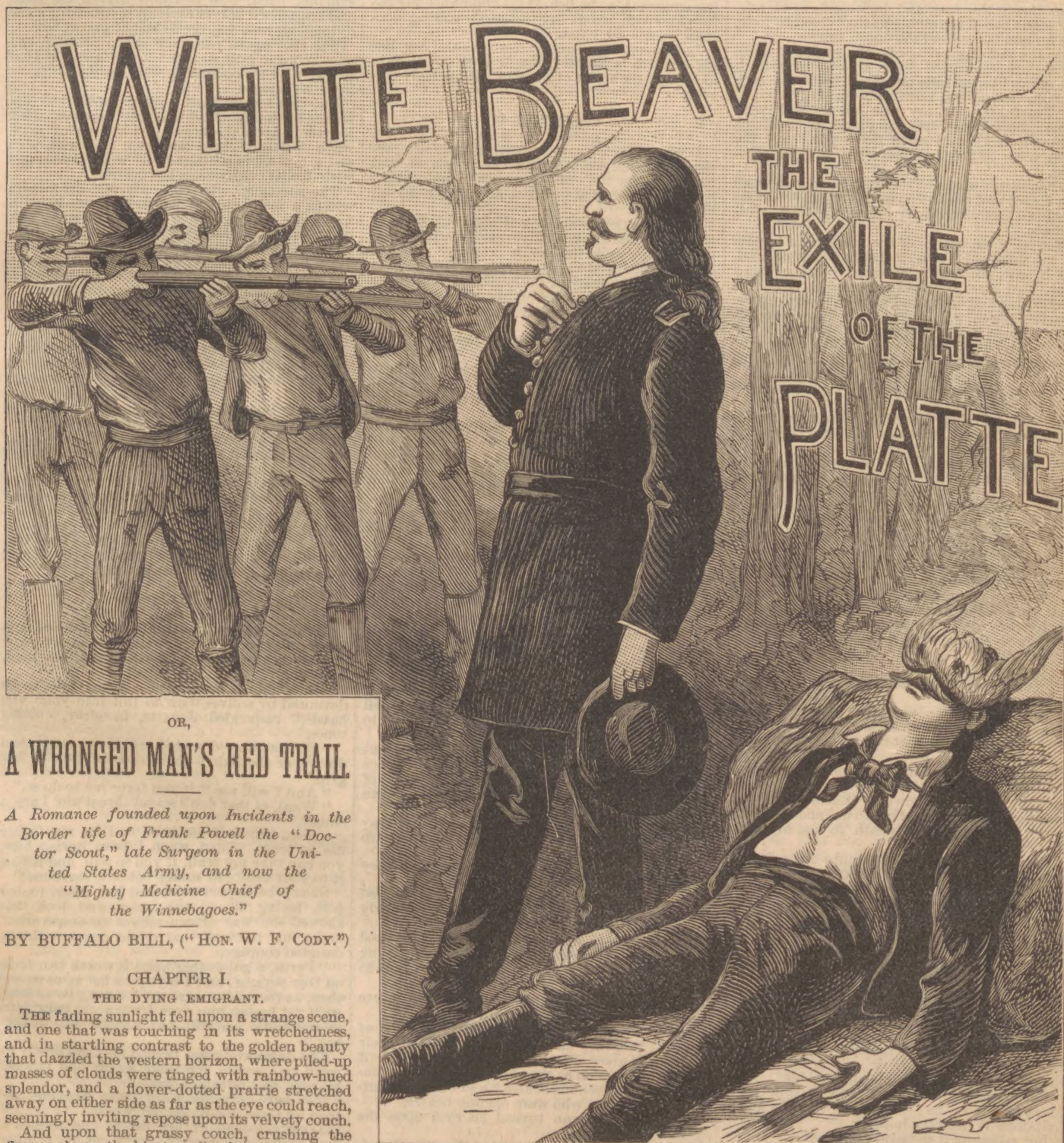
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OR, A WRONGED MAN'S RED TRAIL.

A Romance founded upon Incidents in the Border life of Frank Powell the "Doctor Scout," late Surgeon in the United States Army, and now the "Mighty Medicine Chief of the Winnebagoes."

BY BUFFALO BILL, ("HON. W. F. CODY.")

CHAPTER I.

THE DYING EMIGRANT.

THE fading sunlight fell upon a strange scene, and one that was touching in its wretchedness, and in startling contrast to the golden beauty that dazzled the western horizon, where piled-up masses of clouds were tinged with rainbow-hued splendor, and a flower-dotted prairie stretched away on either side as far as the eye could reach, seemingly inviting repose upon its velvety couch.

And upon that grassy couch, crushing the flowers beneath him, reclined a man, a tiny stream of blood welling at every breath from his

FRANK POWELL DID NOT ALLOW A MUSCLE IN HIS FACE TO QUIVER. "MEN, MY HEART LIES JUST HERE, SO AIM TRUE, AND DO NOT BOTCH YOUR WORK," HE COOLLY SAID.

broad breast, redder than the reddest flowers that peeped up from the emerald grass, and his face as white as though death already had set its seal upon his lips.

By his side crouched, rather than knelt, the slender form of a girl, and her hands grasped those of the man who lay so desperately wounded before her eyes.

A few paces distant stood two horses, their heads hanging down, their sides heaving, as though they had been pressed hard and long, and were too beaten out to crop the tempting grass at their feet.

The man was of powerful build, dressed in a corduroy suit, the vest and coat being thrown open and disclosing the wound that was in his breast.

A slouch hat and belt of arms lay by his side, and his head was supported upon a blanket taken from one of the saddles.

The face of the man was strong, the features well-cut and refined, though now pinched with suffering, and his hair and beard were turning gray, showing that he was past the meridian of life.

The form bending over him was certainly that of a young girl, though her face, bent downward could not be seen, and masses of golden curls hung about her shoulders.

She wore a riding habit of dark cloth, and a plumed hat and gloves lay near by.

Such was the scene that the setting sun fell upon, there in that lonely prairie, very far from the abode of man.

A sad and touching picture it was, and growing sadder and more wretched as the golden hues died in the west, and dark shadows of coming night began to fall about that desolate four, the human beings and the dumb brutes.

As the sunset splendors faded away, and chill, drear darkness settled down, a moan broke from the man's lips, and the cry burst from the girl:

"Oh, God above! but this is fearful!"

"Fearful for you, my poor Janette, to have to remain here alone when I am gone, and madness for me to feel that I must leave you," and the deep voice of the man quivered with his emotion.

Then silence again fell between them, as though the horror and desolation of their situation overwhelmed them too deeply for words to find utterance.

Suddenly the silence of the scene was broken by the shrill chirp of a cricket in the grass, and, one by one, the sounds increased, coming from a night-bird here, an insect there, until the chorus swelled far and wide, and seemed to bring to the hearts of those who heard that they were not wholly alone in the vast solitude of nature.

"Father, listen to the songs of the birds and insects, for they give me hope," at last said the girl.

"To me, Janette, they are singing my requiem—Hark!"

Piteous, whining, dismal, there arose on the air the howl of a wolf, that had suddenly chimed in with the insect and bird chorus.

A cry broke from the lips of the girl, and she drew closer to the man, though he had no power to protect her.

The man shuddered, and again deep silence fell upon the prairie, for the songsters in their grassy coverts ceased their shrill notes when the wolf's hated voice joined in the chorus.

A moment of deathlike stillness, and then again came that dismal howl floating over the prairie, to be answered afar off by the voice of a mate, that showed the cruel brutes were abroad searching for prey, and already seemed to scent human blood upon the air.

"Janette!"

"Father!"

"You have two foes to contend against when I am gone."

"Oh, father! do not speak of dying!" groaned the girl in heart-broken sobs.

"I must speak of what must be, my child, for I feel life ebbing away. Death I do not fear; but to leave you, Janette, alone in the world, alone in this wild solitude, with human foes upon your trail and howling beasts about you, with no help near, nowhere to go, and I dead, is worse, far worse than death to me, my poor, poor child."

The man had drawn the picture strongly, but it was no stronger than it was true.

He was dying there without aid that might have saved him, and he had received his wound from men who were now upon his trail, and who had been distanced only by the greater speed of the horses ridden by those they pursued, but who if not thrown off the scent by darkness, must soon appear.

Helpless against human foes he certainly was, while nearer and nearer sounded the howling of the wolves, which told that brute enemies were also on his track.

Dying, he must leave that poor girl his daughter, alone in her sorrow and peril, and the thought was anguish to his inmost soul.

Nervously his hand touched the butt of one of his revolvers in the belt lying by his side, and he half-drew it from the holster.

But releasing it suddenly, he cried:

"No! no! no! I cannot do that, I cannot do that!"

"Cannot do what, father?" asked the girl, who feared that his mind was wandering.

"Janette, the thought came over me to end at once your suffering and mine," he said, hoarsely.

"But how, father?"

"By sending a bullet through your heart, and then turning the muzzle of the weapon upon myself."

"Oh, father!"

"It is terrible, my child, for one instant to indulge the thought; but you know just how we stand. The crime of another drove me to this wild land, an emigrant, with all my worldly possessions on four wheels, and you my only hope and comfort. This afternoon the little we had was taken from us, and for hours we have been fugitives, flying from men who will be as merciless to you as those howling wolves will be."

"There is no help near, and I am dying, so do not wonder that I wish to see you dead ere I let go my grip on life, and that is why the thought came over me to kill you and then end my sufferings of brain and body, and God would forgive the act, I know."

The young girl shuddered, drooped her head an instant, and then said in a voice that rung like a trumpet:

"No, no, father! do not let your life pass out with my blood upon your hands and you a suicide, for I tell you, happen what may, to me, you shall be avenged."

"Yes, I swear it here with uplifted hand above your head, dying as you are, my father, that you shall be avenged."

"Great God! Janette! Janette! the horror of our situation has driven you mad!" cried the dying emigrant, as he beheld his child kneeling before him with hands uplifted, and vowing vengeance upon their foes.

In dismay, he made an effort to calm her, but his strength failed him, and he sunk down again as though the spark of life had left his body forever.

CHAPTER II.

A GIRL AT BAY.

WHEN Janette saw her father sink back, apparently dead, she uttered a cry of alarm that rung out over the prairie, silencing momentarily the howling of the wolves, and threw herself by his side.

All of her fiery nature had asserted itself in that one burst of avowed revenge against their persecutors, and the gentle dove-like girl had suddenly changed into a revengeful woman.

But the fear that her outburst had driven the flickering life out of the dying man, made her once more the passive girl she was before, and she cried anxiously:

"Father, oh, father! speak to me!"

With an effort he answered:

"Well, my poor child, what would you have me say?"

"That you forgive my outburst of temper, which seemed to affect you so."

"No, Janette, you did not pain me, for I was glad to see that you had the spirit to protect yourself, if driven to it. Now I feel if the worst comes, you will yourself end your misery, rather than live on through long years of sorrow and wretchedness."

"I will, father," was the firm reply.

"Bless you, my child—but hark! was not that a hoof-fall upon the prairie?"

Both listened attentively and then Janette said softly:

"Yes, father, horsemen are coming this way, but they are yet far off."

"They may pass us by in the darkness."

"I fear not, sir, for even the moon has turned against us," she said bitterly, as she pointed to the moon just rising above the horizon in all its silvery beauty.

"I saw its light, Janette, and feared that it was a prairie fire, and that we had another evil to face. But our foes may still be too far off to see us."

"I wish I could give you hope, father, but those cruel brutes will make our presence known," and she pointed to a half a score of hungry wolves that squatted near and were howling dismally in chorus.

"Yes, they too hear the horsemen, and fear they will be driven from their expected prey, so howl in savage disappointment."

"But, let them wait, for ere very long they must feast on me," said the dying emigrant.

"Father, would you drive me mad?" cried Janette, and seizing a revolver she quickly leveled and fired it.

The shot rung across the prairie and dropped one of the wolves dead, while the others sprung upon him in their hungry fury and tore him to pieces.

"Janette, that shot has told our foes where we are," groaned the emigrant.

"Those howling beasts would have done as much. See, they have tasted the blood of their mate, and grow clamorous for ours now, so it will be a question as to which gets us—the human or the ravenous brutes," and Janette pointed to the wolves who were coming nearer.

The wounded man turned his eyes upon the girl, and said softly:

"Is this my gentle, dove-eyed Janette that is talking?"

"Even the worm will turn against the beetle that crushes it, father, and I shall also turn against my foes, be they brute or human."

Her eyes flashed in the moonlight, and her bosom heaved, while her father observed that her face had lost its soft beauty and had become cold and stern.

He closed his eyes and silence again fell between the two, though the wolves, emboldened by their feast, had crept nearer, and seemed waiting for an unguarded moment to spring upon their prey.

With one hand grasping her father's and the other clutching the revolver, Janette crouched on the prairie awaiting the attack of the wolves, or the coming of her foes, and ready to greet either one with a nerve and strength born of the desperation of their situation.

In an occasional lull of the howling and snarling of the brutes, the rapid clatter of hoofs upon the prairie could be heard, and it was very evident that the horsemen had been guided by the pistol-shot and were coming nearer to their victims.

The wolves also heard the hoof-falls growing louder and louder, and knew that they would lose their feast if they did not boldly rush in upon their game.

Some such intention Janette seemed to read in their fiery eyes as the moonlight shone full upon them, for, releasing her father's hand, she took up another revolver and thus sat facing the score of hideous brutes.

It was a strange and thrilling tableau, and one which Janette could stand but a very short while, so she again fired upon the skulking, snarling pack, who had now driven the tired and frightened horses close up to where lay the dying emigrant and crouched the girl at bay.

The shot again rung across the prairies, and once more a wolf dropped, to be instantly torn to pieces by his comrades, who fought savagely over the carcass.

But this second feast only whetted their appetites for human food, and they were preparing to rush in upon the brave girl and dying man, when up dashed three horsemen and with yells and a few shots scattered the wolves, who fled with dismal yelps across the prairie.

The horsemen who thus arrived drew rein within a few paces of the striking tableau before them, and not one of them dismounted, but, seated upon their horses, they gazed upon the prostrate man and crouching girl by his side.

Their horses seemed to have been hard run and were panting heavily, and one who looked into the faces of the riders for sympathy and aid in misfortune would have been no reader of human nature, for there was no pity, no mercy, no manliness there.

They were men of the plains who evidently warred upon their fellows for gold, and shunned civilization to save their necks from the gallows.

Rough, uncouth, savage in the pursuit of gold, and merciless to a victim they were, and they had hotly pursued the man who lay dying at their feet, and the girl who knelt there at bay, for Janette held in each hand a revolver.

The moon shone brightly down upon the scene, the very wretchedness of which should have welled up in their hearts at least an atom of sympathy.

But those men knew not the word. They had trailed their game well, had run it to cover, and were going to secure it at all hazards.

CHAPTER III.

A TRIO OF RED ANGELS.

"WELL, old man, we has run yer down, and yer owes it ter us thet ther coyotes didn't claw yer an' ther leetle gal up," said one of the men, unfeelingly.

"It would not have been a worse fate to be devoured by wolves than to fall into your vile hands," responded Janette, in clear, cutting tones.

"Ho! ho! ther dove hes got claws, pards, and durned ef she hain't got a shootin'-iron in her grip."

"And I will use it if you force me to do so."

"Waal, ef thet don't sound threat'nin' I are a sinner."

"Men, begone from here, and let my father die in peace. Then, when I have buried him, you can take my trail, if you so will, and follow it to your death, or mine; but now leave me!"

She spoke imperiously, and had risen to her feet, facing them with mien and look that showed she was driven almost to desperation, and would meet all that might occur with undaunted courage.

"Pards, a gal in ther hand is worth two loose on ther perarer, and I says pick her up now, and then, as ther old man seems ter hang on so long, we'll jist hasten him over Jordan an' bury him, so the leetle one will hev nuthin' ter disturb her."

The dying emigrant turned his head slowly toward his enemies, for their words had reached his ears, and he said, hoarsely:

"Janette, give me one of those weapons, and then let those fiends do their worst."

Janette looked at her father and seemed to read his determination to carry out his original intention, to take her life and then his own.

But the scenes through which she had passed had aroused a spirit in her nature that would not down, and she would face the worst rather than meet death at the hands of her father, so she answered firmly:

"Father, to the last I will defend you and myself."

Then turning to the three horsemen she continued distinctly:

"Now, inhuman wretches that you are, come on and do your worst!"

The prairie ruffians were nonplused at this bold front.

They had stood in some fear of the man, wounded as they knew him to be; but now they found him helpless and the girl, hardly on the verge of womanhood, boldly daring them to meet her, and defying them.

They could, with a shot end her life; but that was not their purpose, for they were acting for a master, and to kill her would be to cost them their lives, they well knew.

To rush upon her and disarm her would cost the lives of one of them at her hands they did not doubt; but as each one feared that he might be the one to fall, the trio had no desire to make the charge upon the desperate girl at bay.

Casting a glance down at her father, and seeing that he was failing fast, Janette seemed to have born in her the courage of a Roman, and she stood her ground, seemingly half-inclined to begin hostilities by firing upon the wretches.

Had they dared her much longer, there is little doubt but that she would have settled the matter in one way or the other by commencing the fight; but just then the ears of all were greeted with the sound of hoof-strokes upon the prairie.

"Some one comes, father, and at a rapid pace. It may be a friend," cried Janette eagerly, grasping at a ray of hope.

"My child, the sound indicates but one horse, and you will not find one man who will dare face that trio of devils," slowly said the wounded man, and with evident pain at the utterance of each word.

"Alas, true!" murmured the young girl, while one of the trio of villains said bluntly:

"Don't let that comin' horse an' rider disturb yer an' ther old man, leetle gal, for we left a pard back on ther trail ter look up a bit o' bizness, an' he it are."

Janette groaned, for she had hoped that the coming man might take great risks to protect a dying fellow-being and a young girl from such scoundrels as these she faced.

"It are our pard, Buster Ben," said one of the men as the horseman drew nearer.

"Yas, I sees his white horse," remarked another, while the third put in with:

"Now this leetle diffikilty will be settled quick for Buster Ben hain't no man ter stand nonsense not even from a purty gal, an' what he does ther cap'n will set down as all right."

Janette made no reply, but knelt beside her father, still grasping her revolvers for instant use.

The coming of the fourth member of the party of villains added no new terrors to her heart, that she had to face still greater evil.

It only gave her hope that the agony of suspense must soon end one way or the other.

"Waal, yer makes a purty picture thar in the moonlight, protectin' yer dying daddy," remarked one of the trio, struck, in spite of himself, at the really touching and painfully thrilling scene.

"It will prove dangerous if you press me," was Janette's calm answer, and just then the coming horseman dashed up.

As he reined his horse suddenly up and confronted the trio of horsemen, he thrust his hands forward, and each held a revolver, while, in a voice with a strange softness of tone, he said:

"Hands up, you brutes, for I cover your hearts!"

"Ther Doctor Scout!" broke in a chorus from the lips of the three villains, and in response came in tones, almost gentle in their utterance:

"Yes, I am White Beaver, the Doctor Scout, and you are a trio of Red Angels of the Overland, and my game, just now."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DOCTOR SCOUT.

"THANK God, we are not forsaken, for see, father, that brave man masters those three wretches."

The words broke from the lips of Janette, and dropping her pistols, she turned her eyes upon the stranger holding at bay the ruffian trio, while her hands grasped those of her father once more.

"Lady, I will serve you in any way in my power, if you will only now assist me to secure these three men of the road," said the Doctor Scout, without taking his eyes off the men he covered with his revolvers.

At his words Janette sprung to her feet, crying:

"Gladly, sir, for I feel wicked enough to kill them. What shall I do, sir?"

"Take the lariat from that man's saddle-born throw the noose over his shoulders, and pinion his arms to his side, if you will."

The request was made in the same pleasant tones as those in which he had before spoken, and Janette was stepping quickly forward to obey, when the man who was to be the object of

her attentions said doggedly, as he dropped his hands to his side:

"No gal shall tie me like a dog, ef I die fer it."

"Die, then, as it is your choice, my man!" and with the words from the stranger's lips came the crack of his revolver.

Without a groan, the man dropped from his saddle, a bullet in his brain, while Janette started back with a cry of horror.

But the words of the stranger recalled her to action, for he said calmly:

"Bind the next one, lady, as I have saved the trouble of looking after that one."

Janette was amazed at the coolness of the stranger; and impressed by his manner, while imbued with perfect confidence, she stepped forward to the next one of the three and laid her hand upon his lariat.

As she did so, he seemed almost tempted to resist, even taking the chances of a shot from the man who had proven himself a most dangerous foe to trifle with.

"Have a care, sir!" came in low, threatening tones from the strange horseman; and it had the desired effect, for the villain said quickly:

"Keerful it is, Doctor, fer I hain't no durned fool ter try your aim ag'in. I hes heard o' it afore, an' I hes jist seen it, so here I ar' fer a leetle gal ter tie as tight as yer kin do it."

Janette had already seized the lariat, and with a skill and strength one would not have suspected her of possessing, she quickly bound the man, and then stepped to the side of the third, who still sat upon his horse with his hands raised above his head.

"Sam, you is in fer it, too, onless yer wishes ter cut up Buck's leetle dido," said his companion.

"Not fer me, pard, fer I'd rather be a live galoot tied up than a dead one tarned loose. Jist put ther rope around me too, miss, only don't git it about my neck."

"You'll die with a rope about your neck yet, my gentle cut-throat," coolly said the Doctor Scout, as he sprung from his horse, and approaching the man bound him securely to his saddle, and then did likewise with his comrade.

"Pard Doctor, we was durned fools ter let yer bag us as yer hes done; but we thought yer was our pard, Buster Ben, who stopped ahind us ter look arter a leetle trail we come across."

"Yes, it was my trail he followed."

"Lordy! did he find you, too?"

"Yes, and if you have respect enough for his memory to wish to bury him, you will find him a few miles back on the prairie," was the quiet remark.

"Cusses o' Kingdom Come! did yer kill Buster Ben, Doctor?" cried one of the men.

"I did, and rendered the country a good service in doing so. We met; he attacked me, and I shot him, while he brought down my horse; but I recaptured this animal which the villain stole from me some months ago, and which is as fine a piece of horseflesh as there is on these plains."

"Waal, waal! and Buster Ben hev passed in his chips!" muttered one, while the other remarked:

"He died game with his boots on, I'm a-knowin'!"

"He died like the coward he was, and you all are, who belong to the Red Angel band, for he whined like a schoolboy, and told me that his gang had attacked and murdered a small emigrant train, and that you three were following a gentleman and his daughter whom your chief had sent you in pursuit of."

"Bah! I could hardly wait for the villain to die, so anxious was I to follow you and thwart your little game."

"And, thank God, sir, that you have thwarted them, for most sadly do we need your aid."

"But these men called you the Doctor Scout, I remember—are you a physician, sir?" and Janette grasped his hand, earnestly.

"My name is Frank Powell; I am a surgeon in the United States Army, miss, and am stationed at the fort some thirty miles from here."

"Oh, sir! for the love of Heaven! see if you can save my father's life, for those men shot him, and, wounded and faint, he fell here, I fear to die."

"I didn't shoot him."

"No, it were Buster Ben," whined the two villains.

"Silence!" sternly cried the Doctor, as he rode toward the wounded man, and dropping on his knees bent over him, while Janette, in eager hope, threw herself by his side and said in a low, quivering voice:

"Tell me that my father will live, sir!"

CHAPTER V.

THE DEATH IN THE MOONLIGHT.

BREATHLESSLY did Janette gaze upon the face of the Doctor Scout, as he bent over her father, for she knew that his words must tell her whether the one being in the world whom she had to love, would live, or die there on that dreary prairie.

"You are wholly conscious, sir, I hope," said the surgeon, in a voice soft and gentle as though he were addressing a child.

"Yes, sir, I am conscious, but my strength is

gone, and I feel that all is over with me," was the low response.

"Never say die, sir, as long as life lasts, but let me see just how you are wounded, and if it is as bad as you think," said the Doctor Scout cheerily.

Then he took from his saddle-pocket a small case of surgical instruments, and, in a rapid, skillful way went about his work.

The wounded man did not flinch under the probe, and the surgeon asked:

"When did you receive this wound?"

"This afternoon—tell him, my child," said the man with an effort.

"We were coming West, sir, to settle, my father and I, and intended to start a stock ranch with what little money we have. We joined a train of other emigrants, and at dawn this morning we were attacked by the band of robbers to which those men belong."

"My father and I, seeing that all was lost, made our escape; but we got bewildered on the prairie, rode back upon our trail, and ran upon four of our foes. We were fired upon, and my father was wounded; but our horses were fine animals, and we distanced our pursuers, until we could go no further, and but for you those men would have had us in their power, for they have no more mercy than wolves."

"You have indeed, suffered; but, feeling that it would be wrong to hide from you the truth, I must tell you, sir, that your wound is fatal."

Poor Janette gave a groan of anguish, but the dying emigrant said firmly:

"I have felt it all along; but I clung to life to protect my poor child. Oh, sir!" and he broke forth in a tone that was piteous in its pathos, "what will become of my poor little girl?"

"Be calm, sir, and tell me all that you would have done; for your daughter, though her father dies upon a Nebraska prairie, shall not be left friendless."

"Oh, thank you for those kind words, sir!" and the emigrant grasped the hand of the surgeon, while he continued in a broken voice:

"I am from the East, sir. Once I was wealthy, but I ruined myself to save one other, and a stain rests upon my good name; but, as Heaven is my judge, I am not guilty."

"I came here with my little Janette, to hide myself from those who knew me, and here I die, and my child is here alone in the world."

"No, not alone," said the Doctor Scout, softly.

"I am happy to hear you say so, sir; but I do not leave her utterly penniless, for in my belt are several thousand dollars which are for her, and to you, my noble friend, I leave Janette and her little fortune."

"I accept the trust, sir, and may Heaven bring curses upon me if I fail in my duty!"

"Come, Janette, you shall be my sister, now," and Doctor Powell held out his hand and took that of the maiden, who was weeping bitterly.

Then the dying man drew the hands of the surgeon and Janette together, and said in a solemn voice:

"May Heaven bless you both, and some day, if no barrier rests between you, may you become all in all to each other!"

"Father!" cried Janette, dropping her head down upon his breast.

Thus she lay for a few moments, sobbing as though her heart would break.

"Come, Janette, we must go now," said Frank Powell after a few moments of silence, broken only by the sobs of the poor girl.

"Go! and leave poor father?" she said almost angrily.

"No, Janette; his spirit has gone; his body we will take with us."

"Dead! dead! dead!" and with this triple wail the unhappy girl fell in a swoon across the body of her father, and the moonlight rested softly upon the scene of woe.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

So deep was the swoon into which Janette had fallen, when the words of Doctor Powell told her that her father was dead, that she seemed almost as if stricken with death too, as she lay there in the moonlight.

But, fortunately, the one who had promised to be her friend—yes, as a brother to her—was skilled in the science of medicine and knew just how to bring her out of her deathlike faint and after some time she opened her eyes and asked faintly:

"Where am I? Who are you, sir?"

"Have you forgotten that I am to be your brother, and you are now under my care?"

She shuddered and covered her face with her hands, while, after an instant, she answered:

"Yes, I remember all now. Poor papa is dead, and Janette is alone."

She spoke so plaintively that the Doctor would not trust himself to speak for an instant.

Then he said:

"You are not alone, my child, and you will find that you can trust me in all things. Come, rally from your grief, for we must bestir ourselves, as this is a dangerous locality."

"I almost wish that I could die and be buried

by the side of father, for you will bury him, won't you?"

"Yes, but not here, for I shall take him to the banks of a stream some miles from here, and where there is a woodland scene of great beauty."

"Come, you must not despair, for you were a daring girl, holding three men at bay, when I rode up, and—"

"Oh, sir! where are those men?"

The cry came almost in a shriek from the girl, and Powell was on his feet in an instant and glancing in the direction where he had left the two prisoners seated upon their horses and securely bound.

"They are gone," he said so coolly that Janette was almost angry with him for showing no excitement, and asked quickly:

"But gone where, and how did they go?"

"They have gone off, bent on more mischief, and they were shrewd enough, when they saw that we were not watching them, to urge their horses into a walk and quietly decamp."

"I should have hopped their animals."

"And I so fear those wretches," she said with a shudder.

"Dismiss fear of them from your mind, Miss—"

"Call me Janette, for I am only a girl."

"Well, Janette, you must feel no dread of them, for they will take good care to give us a wide berth in future, and it is seldom that the Red Angels ever trust themselves this near the fort."

"You call them Red Angels, and I have heard so many stories told of an outlaw band by that name that infest the Overland Trails."

"Yes, and you have had some sad experience of their work."

"Sad indeed," and she glanced at the form of her dead father.

"They are known as the Red Angels of the Overland," continued Doctor Powell, "and they rob rich trains coming West or going East. Their leader is a young man, some say, and others claim that he is an old man, but, as he wears a mask no one seems to know just what he is. But he is a thorough devil, and there are several large rewards offered for him dead or alive, yet he still manages to keep at large."

"They call him Captain Kit, I believe?"

"Yes, and he also bears the very appropriate name of the Hyena of the Plains. But, we must be off, Janette, and, as your horses have had a rest, we can push along at great speed."

Leading the animal, ridden to the fatal spot by the dead emigrant, up to the place, the Doctor Scout raised the body in his arms, with an ease that denoted marvelous strength, which could not but attract the attention of Janette even in her grief, and placed it upon the horse, securing it firmly there with a lariat.

Then he lifted Janette to her saddle, and springing upon the back of his splendid white steed, he led the way from the spot which had been the theater of such strange scenes.

As they rode off, the wolves, with yells of delight, rushed in to feast upon the body of the dead outlaw, and at a gallop Frank Powell urged the horses on that the sounds might not reach the ears of the poor orphan girl at his side.

Pressing forward at a good pace for a couple of hours, a dark line suddenly appeared ahead, which the Doctor Scout told Janette were trees bordering a small stream, in a bend of which they would come to a halt, for there was a good camping-ground, with plenty of timber to shelter them.

The spot was at last reached, and in the moonlight, Janette, at the request of the Doctor Scout, selected a place where she wished to bury her father.

It was on the bank of a stream, beneath sheltering trees, and seemed well formed by nature for a resting-place for the dead.

After laying the body on the velvety grass, and unsaddling and staking the animals out to feed, Frank Powell went to work with his knife, to dig an humble grave.

Meantime Janette paced to and fro upon the river-bank, her hands clasped before her, her eyes downcast, and now and then pausing to watch the work of the man who had so well befriended her.

It was tedious work, and several hours passed before the grave was ready to receive all that remained of the unfortunate emigrant.

Then, removing his hat, the Doctor Scout placed the body in the grave, and taking up some loose dirt in his hand, slowly and solemnly, in his deep, rich voice, repeated the entire service for the dead, and consigning the remains to their final resting-place, "dust to dust, and ashes to ashes."

Filling the grave, and protecting it by fallen branches from the ravages of wild beasts, the Doctor Scout then led Janette to another part of the timber, and quickly erected for her a little wicky-up in which to pass the night.

This was made most comfortable by her own and her father's blankets. Then a fire was built, and a supper cooked with a skill that showed the Doctor to be a thorough plainsman, long inured to camp-life.

Having seen the maiden safely at rest in her little shelter, the Doctor Scout bade her to seek slumber in perfect safety, as he would be on

watch, and putting out the fire, he went to the edge of the timber unprotected by the river, and there stationed himself as a sentinel.

As he stood in the edge of the timber, the moonlight falling full upon him, his superb form was rendered distinctly visible.

Over six feet in height, he was a man of perfect physique, with great broad breast, square shoulders, and held himself as erect as a soldier on parade.

His face was a study in its strength and womanly perfection of feature combined, for he had all the power of a daring, resolute man, and all the softness of expression of a woman.

His eyes were black and full of fire, his hair matched them in hue, and was worn long, falling in waving masses below his shoulders, while his complexion was dark, the bronze betraying the tinge of Indian blood that flowed in his veins.*

A dark-brown mustache shaded his mouth, yet did not wholly hide the look of conscious power and stern resolution resting there, while his chin was massive and indicated the great strength of character he possessed.

He was dressed in the uniform of a surgeon of cavalry in the United States Army, and wore a black slouch hat, encircled by a gold cord, and looped up on one side by an ivory pin, representing a *White Beaver*, which name the Indians had given him as being the mightiest of medicine-men, before whom their great medicine chiefs bent in honor and admiration.†

His pants were tucked into the tops of handsome cavalry boots, on the heels of which were a pair of massive gold spurs.

About his waist was an Indian belt, handsomely worked in strange devices, and it contained a jewel-hilted bowie-knife and a pair of pearl-handled, gold-mounted revolvers, while at his back was a cartridge-box, also elaborately decorated with bead-work.

His feet were small, and his hands, resting upon the muzzle of a repeating-rifle, which he had taken from its place at his saddle-horn, were also small and shapely, but withal had an iron grip.

For a long time, until the dawn broke, the Doctor Scout stood on guard in the edge of the timber, and then his eyes became fixed upon something far off upon the prairie.

As the daylight increased, the dark object took the shape of horsemen, a half-score in number, and they were coming straight toward the timber and directly upon his trail there!

"Ah, *bloodhounds*! that accounts for their following the trail in the night," and he placed a small pocket-glass to his eyes and continued:

"There are three of the brutes trailing, and in less than half an hour they will be upon us."

So saying the Doctor Scout wheeled quickly, and went at a long, swinging pace to arouse his fair young charge.

Arriving at the wicky-up he started with amazement, and a cry of commingled alarm and surprise came from his lips.

The wicky-up was vacant, and nowhere around was Janette visible.

"Gone! Great God! what can this mysterious disappearance mean?" cried the Doctor Scout, for once shaken out of his calm into excitement.

CHAPTER VII.

A TRIO OF SHOTS.

FOR a moment, after making the discovery of Janette's disappearance, the Doctor Scout was completely nonplused.

His eyes roved furtively about the timber, but nowhere did they fall upon the object of his search.

The horses were there, his own noble white, and the animals that had been ridden by Janette and her father; but the fair rider was nowhere visible!

"What can it mean?" he slowly asked himself. "Can she have feared me and so deserted me?" was the question put to himself.

"No, no, she cannot have done that; but, if so, I must track her, and prove to her that I am to be trusted."

Then his face suddenly paled as he asked the question, almost in a whisper:

"Good God! can her sorrows have driven her mad, and she now be wandering over the prairies?"

"Well, whatever has happened to her, I must find her, and defend her with my life."

"Ah! I had almost forgotten that I have hounds upon my trail," and springing to busy action, he soon had the three horses saddled and bridled.

"She cannot have gone toward the prairie yonder, or I would have seen her. I will follow the bend of the river around, even if I have to fight these Red Angels."

So saying, he sprang upon the back of his own horse, and leading the other two, rode toward the river-bank.

He had gone but a short distance when he

* Doctor Frank Powell's great grandfather was *Owachita*, the Great Medicine Chief of the Seneca Indians, and his mother was the daughter of a New York farmer of noble ancestry.

† In some of the far western tribes the Indians regard the white beaver as the most sacred of animals, and their greatest chiefs alone are allowed to wear the skin of this revered quadruped.

suddenly drew rein and gazed intently before him.

"Poor girl, I might have expected she would be there!"

Dismounting, he walked toward the little clump of trees, a short distance before him, and where was visible the form of Janette.

She was seated upon one of the logs upon her father's grave, and bending over, her face buried in her hands, her wealth of golden curls hanging about her in wild profusion and resting upon the grass at her feet.

Approaching softly, the Doctor Scout called her name:

"Janette!"

No answer. Then, louder than before:

"Janette!"

Still she did not move, and, with a shade of anxiety upon his handsome face he stepped forward and bent over her.

"Poor child, she has gone to sleep in this drear spot. Come, Janette, we must be off."

At his touch she sprang to her feet and in a bewildered way gazed at him; but memory came quickly back to her, and she said:

"Oh! it is you, sir?"

"Yes, I missed you and found you here, but let me aid you to mount for we must be off."

"Has anything happened, sir?"

"No, Janette."

"Will I not see my father's grave again?" and the tears came into her beautiful eyes.

"Yes, many times, for, if you are content to remain here on these plains, you will live not far from here, and can come often to this spot, which now is so sacred to you."

"You are so kind, sir, but see, is not that a wolf?"

She pointed through the timber as she spoke, and he saw that the secret which he had endeavored to keep from her must be told, so he said quietly:

"No, Janette, they are not wolves, for see, there are three of the brutes."

"There is danger for us ahead, for they are hounds!" she cried, in alarm—"bloodhounds!"

"Yes, they are hounds, and upon our trail."

"And their masters?"

"Are back on the prairie, coming on at full speed."

"And who are they?"

"The Red Angels, Janette; but do not fear them," and his manner was so deliberate, as he drew a revolver from his belt, that Janette exclaimed:

"Oh, how can you be so calm before such fearful danger? For God's sake let us fly!"

He turned at her appeal, raised her in his arms, and placed her in her saddle.

But again she cried:

"Oh, sir, mount and fly, or those bloodhounds will tear you to pieces; and—see! yonder come our worst foes, the Red Angels!" and she pointed through the timber to where the horsemen were visible about a quarter of a mile distant, and coming on at full speed after the hounds.

The ferocious brutes, with mouths open and tongues hanging out, were now within a few rods, coming on the scent, silent and swift, seemingly sure of their prey.

Almost fascinated by their silent trailing, Janette sat motionless upon her horse, which now, with the other two animals, catching sight of the swiftly-coming bloodhounds, began to show a spirit of restiveness, as though anxious to dash away in flight.

Perfectly calm stood the Doctor Scout, his eyes fixed upon the hounds, and his revolver cocked in his right hand, while he held the reins of the three horses with his left.

Had he shown some excitement, some degree of haste, Janette would have found it a relief; but his perfect calmness, his impassible face, made her almost dread that he did not realize his danger, and with staring eyes she watched him.

Nearer and nearer came the hounds, and the one in the lead was not thirty feet away when the revolver was suddenly thrust forward and the sharp report followed.

The wind drove the puff of smoke directly into Janette's face, and while thus blinded she heard two more shots in rapid succession.

Then the smoke drifted away, and she beheld the three bloodhounds quivering upon the ground and heard the deep voice of her preserver say:

"Now, Janette, we will cross the river, and the rapid gallop we must take will give us an appetite for breakfast."

As he spoke, Frank Powell sprang into the saddle and led the way down the river-bank, just as a wild yell came from the Red Angels as they dashed into the edge of the timber and beheld their intended victims.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FLIGHT.

AFTER the bitter experience she had had with the outlaws of the prairie, Janette was more than anxious to press on, for the glance she had at the coming horsemen showed her that they numbered fully half a score.

The imperturbable manner of her protector at first fretted her, for he checked her ardor, and with a pleasant smile said:

"We have plenty of time, Janette—no need to hurry."

"No need to hurry with those bloodhounds on our track?" she ejaculated, almost indignantly.

"I killed the bloodhounds, Janette."

"I mean the human bloodhounds, for they have no less mercy than the brutes."

"True, but their horses are tired with a long run and ours are fresh, so that we can gallop away from them."

"I never thought of that, sir," and Janette began to feel more and more impressed by the remarkable man at her side.

She had seen him dash up to the rescue of herself and father with the odds three against him; she had witnessed his deadly shot at the man who resisted being bound by her, and then had seen him drop the three bloodhounds in quick succession, while in all he had neither seemed in haste nor in the least degree moved by the dangers about him.

Now he showed to her that he held no fear of their foes, ten to one though they were, and she at once conquered all nervousness and without trepidation gazed back at the coming horse-men.

"Come, Janette, we must swim the river, or the Red Angels will be upon us," said Powell, and he rode into the water, followed by the led horse, while Janette dashed into the stream after the Doctor Scout.

Once across on the other shore, they could see that their pursuers had reached the dead bloodhounds and had momentarily halted there.

At this Doctor Powell also drew rein and surveyed the party through his little field-glass.

"I see there our two prisoners of last night, Janette, so that accounts for the pursuit."

"Oh! if they only had not escaped!" murmured the girl.

"Well, some time they will be caught for the last time. Here, take the glass and look at the man on the black horse. He is just moving on after us once more."

"I see him. He is dressed in black and wears a red mask," said Janette, looking through the glass now with the utmost deliberateness.

"That is the arch-angel," exclaimed Powell, with a smile.

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Well, he is the one who first won the name of the Red Angel."

"Indeed! It is the chief, then?"

"Yes, Captain Kit, or Captain Hyena, for he is called both, as also the Red Angel. He began his life as a Gentleman of the Road, a year ago, in Kansas, where he, single-handed, was wont to stop the Overland stage-coaches and rob the passengers, killing any one who resisted. But we will ride on, and I will tell you more of the outlaw chief as we go along," and Powell resumed, as their horses galloped along side by side.

"He was called the Red Angel first from the fact that his mask was a pair of crimson wings, real bird's wings, dyed, and they were so arranged as to wholly conceal his face, his eyes peering through two holes in the feathers."

"As they made it too warm for him in Kansas, after awhile he came here to the upper trails, gathering around him a band of cut-throats, and now has a score or more that are a terror to the country, for they have eluded even our best scouts and picked soldiers sent after them."

"Has he no haunts to which you can drive him?"

"If so we have never found them, for he seems to live on the prairie wholly, and rumor on the plains has it that he buries his treasure in certain places, determined to come and get it after he has accumulated a certain sum."

"He is a most mysterious man, indeed," said Janette, with deep interest at all she had heard regarding the Hyena Captain, as the outlaw chief was often called on account of his cruelties.

"Yes, and it was to solve the mystery regarding him that I was away from the fort, when I so opportunely came upon you, for I love adventure and danger, and it is because I often take long scouts upon the prairie alone that they give me at the fort the name of the Doctor Scout. But see! they have halted at the river, as though they see it is useless to pursue us further."

"Thank Heaven for that," fervently said Janette, as she saw that the Red Angels had indeed halted in the timber, and were dismounting from their horses, as though having given up the chase.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAMP IN THE TIMBER.

THE two prisoners, whom Doctor Powell had so securely bound to their horses, were cunning villains, and they realized fully if taken to the fort by their captor that their lives would come to a speedy termination, for already they were branded as outlaws and under sentence of death for their crimes.

Seeing the touching scene before them, when the emigrant was dying, they very naturally concluded that they were for the moment forgotten.

They sat upon their horses, some thirty feet from Powell, and one whispered to the other:

"It is our only chance, pard."

"Neck or nothin', so go in ter win ef yer hes a idee," was the response.

The other bent over in his saddle until his teeth touched the bridle-reins, and drawing upon one, he gently urged his horse to turn and move away.

His example was followed by his companion, and the two animals walked slowly across the prairie, making no sound upon the grass, and unnoticed by Powell and the girl, so deeply were they occupied.

Once they had reached a safe distance, the two villains urged their horses into a gallop, and they had a good start before their escape was observed.

Giving their horses rein, for in fact, bound as they were, they could do nothing else, they went at a sweeping gallop over the prairie, until in the moonlight they discovered a moving mass ahead.

The horses snorted in alarm, and made a circuit to avoid what lay before them in their path.

"It is Buster Ben's body, pard, an' ther coyotes is jist a enj'vin' him," explained one.

"Yas, it are Ben, fer here are about whar the Doc salted him. An' we w'u'd hev been in a like fix ef we hed not levanted, fer thet saw-bones are a terror on wheels."

"Yer is right, he are, an' ther Red Angel chief hes got ter mark down two gerloots ag'in' him this heur night, fer he hes reduced ther force by thet figger!"

"He hev, fer a fact, an' durned ef I don't wish he'd stick ter doctorin' up at ther fort, fer ther pills he gives ter us pilgrims is suddint death, or I prevaricates ther truth."

"Yas, one o' his pills does ther biz; but which way is we ter go, pard?"

"I guesses ther horses is takin' us right, fer it are my desire ter catch on with ther boys an' git this rope overcoat tuk off whar thet Devil Doctor give me."

"Yas, mine fits me uncommon tight; it kinder binds me so as I hasn't ther full use o' my arms; but say, pard, hain't thet a glimmer o' a camp-fire yonder?"

"Yas, an' it are in ther timber we calls ther Emigrant Park."

"Yas."

"Does yer think it kin be ther boys?"

"I guess so; but ef it hain't, we is going thar, fer these durned animiles hes got the'r necks stretched fer thet fire, you kin bet."

"I'm agreein' with yer—Whoa! ho! I says ter yer!" and the two villains now began to call to their horses to stop them.

But they could not check their gait, and, in fact, their cries started the animals off in alarm, and they went dashing away at their full speed for the distant camp-fire.

The horses saw rest there for the night, and were not to be disappointed, for their instinct told them that their riders were powerless to check them.

The riders held hope that the camp-fire was that of their friends, whom they had reason to believe were somewhere in that locality.

But, should it be the camp of a scouting-party from the fort, or an emigrant train, with some guide along with it that knew them, they were well aware that their hours on earth were numbered.

With every effort, therefore, they endeavored to check their horses, and failing in this, to free their hands and legs.

But the man who had tied them knew his business, and they were wholly unable to free themselves.

As they drew nearer to the timber, in which was now visible a large camp-fire, the sweat broke out upon their foreheads, and they became fearfully alarmed.

"What are it, pard?" asked one.

"I hain't able ter guess, but I does hope that it aire our own men," was the answer.

And on the two horses sped, right up to the timber, and unheeding a ringing challenge to halt from a guard in the edge of the thicket, they were fired upon several times in rapid succession.

Down went one of the horses, while loud rung the cries from the two men to cease firing, for they were friends.

The challenge of the guard and the shots were followed by the ringing notes of a bugle up in the timber, and almost instantly a number of horsemen came dashing to the spot, their revolvers in their hands.

"Ho, guard, what is this alarm?" called out a deep voice.

"Two of our band, cap'n, have come, sir; but, as their horses was in full run, and I could not see that the boys was tied, I opened on 'em with my six and dropped one o' the'r animiles," said the guard in explanation.

"Who are you?" and the man addressed as captain rode to where the guard was untying one of the men from his dead horse, while the other animal and his rider had been halted near.

"We is what is left o' four o' yer pilgrims, cap'n, seein' thet Buster Ben an' Buck accepted a invite ter hand in the'r chips."

"Ah, Sam Slick, that is you, is it?" called out the captain, recognizing the two men.

"It are my remains, cap'n, fer I hain't myself, sir."

"Bound hand and foot, as I live, and your two comrades that went with you dead, you say?"

"Yas, cap'n."

"And one man and a girl did this?" said the chief with a sneer.

"Yas, Pard Cap'n, it were done by one man an' a gal."

"Bah! you were cowards to let that old emigrant and his daughter get the best of you in this way. I certainly believed that you four could capture him, and, as you didn't, I only wish that he had killed you, too," and the chief turned and rode back to the camp-fire in the timber, where he had been enjoying his supper when warned by the shots of the guard that there was something wrong.

CHAPTER X.

CAPTAIN KIT, THE RED ANGEL.

As he dismounted from his horse at the bivouac fire, the chief threw his bridle-rein to a huge negro who advanced to take the animal, and said:

"Brick, it was a false alarm, so let me have my supper."

"Yas, massa," answered the negro, and staking the horse out, he returned with the cooking utensils and provisions he had hastily gathered together at the alarm, and began again to prepare supper.

A hundred yards distant were several other camp-fires, and to these the men of the band returned, accompanied by their two comrades whose strange rush into the night camp had called all so quickly to arms.

There were fully a score of men gathered about the several fires, and a wild-looking, desperate set they were, armed to the teeth, and dressed in buckskin hunting-shirts and leather leggings, while their heads were surmounted by huge black sombreros.

Their faces were heavily bearded, and without an exception were cruel and villainous in expression and features, while all of them wore their hair long.

Staked out to feed not far distant, and with a man standing guard over them, were fully half a hundred horses, half of which were pack-animals, for the packs were then lying near the fires.

It was a wild but picturesque group, and the man who lived apart at his own camp-fire, with his huge negro servant to do his bidding, was the leading spirit of the band.

Spreading upon the ground a handsome Mexican *serape*, the chief used a saddle for a pillow, and threw himself down at full length, his feet to the fire.

Taking a cigar from a handsome case, he put it between his lips, while Brick brought him a coal of fire to light it by.

The man as he lay there was a remarkable looking personage. He was dressed in black, the cloth being of the finest broadcloth, cut to fit him in a style a city dandy might envy. His boots came far above his knees, were shapely, and armed with gold spurs. He wore a white flannel shirt, with embroidered front, and under the collar was a black silk scarf in which glittered a diamond of rare beauty and great value.

About his slender waist was an officer's belt and sash, and he carried a revolver upon either hip, and a knife in a scabbard fastened to the shoulder-band that supported the belt.

Thus located, right across his breast, the knife was ready for an instant's grip.

The man was of handsome form, slender, graceful, yet his physique denoted strength above the average. His hair was a mass of golden curls, hanging half-way down his back, and his head was sheltered by a black sombrero encircled by a gold cord, and with a small pair of red wings looping up the flap in front.

But the strangest of all about this remarkable personage was that he wore a mask. It was not a mask such as one sees at a *bal masque*, but a pair of crimson wings!

They were fastened together just above his mouth, the tips running up above the crown of his hat, and being bent backward, they concealed his entire face to the ears, excepting his mouth and chin—the former being half-hidden by a long, silken blonde mustache.

In the wings were holes through which gleamed a pair of bright eyes that appeared to be black, as they glittered in the firelight.

Upon his hands were a pair of black kid riding-gloves, and the little finger of the left hand sported an elegant solitaire diamond, worn over the kid, and which danced like an evil eye in the firelight.

A massive gold chain encircled his neck, and he impatiently took out a gold watch of rare workmanship, and said:

"It is getting late, Brick, and I am very hungry."

"Yas, massa, I hab de supper fer you now, sah," and the negro took from a pack-saddle a small folding-table and chair, and soon spread a

tempting camp meal before his strange chief, who threw away his cigar, and rising, devoted himself to the task of eating with an evident relish.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OUTLAWS TAKE THE TRAIL.

As Captain Hyena, as his men always called him in whispers when he was in a temper, finished his supper, his eyes fell upon two of the band approaching him.

He recognized them as the two who had created the alarm by dashing into camp, but as they halted near him and saluted, he made no sign of seeing them, but rose and called out:

"Brick, bring the hounds for their supper."

The negro stepped back in the timber a few paces, and soon returned, leading by chains six massive and ferocious-looking Cuban bloodhounds.

The brutes growled savagely as they drew near, but noticing their chief they gave a sullen sign of recognition, and accepted the food thrown from his hands with greed, though not with apparent gratitude.

"Well, what have you to say?" and the Red Angel turned to the two men, as Brick led the hounds back and fastened them.

"We wants ter tell yer, cap'n, 'bout our chase o' ther gal an' her father," said Slick Sam, or Sam Slick, for he was called by both names.

"There seems little to tell, for I sent you and two others, believing I could trust you to bring back the emigrant and his daughter, and lo! back you two cowards come, bound hand and foot, while your comrades were killed, and those I wanted escaped. Is not this all you have to tell?"

"No, cap'n, not by a holla-fulla!"

"Well, what else is there to say? Out with it!"

"You hain't on ther right trail, cap'n, an' we wishes ter set yer squar', so as yer won't mis-judge us."

"Out with it, I repeat."

"Yer see, sir, arter you seen them as you wanted in partickler hed escaped, an' sent us four arter 'em, we jist went along as rapid as we c'd, an' soon struck ther trail, an' follered it lively."

"Waal, sir, toward arternoon, right upon us, over a divide o' ther pararee, rode ther old man an' ther gal."

"We was tuk aback, but as he begun shootin', one o' us shooted back—"

"Ha! after my orders not to harm them you dared fire?"

"Yer see, cap'n—"

"Which one of you fired at them?" and the angry light in the eyes of the chief caused Slick Sam to say, quickly:

"It war Buster Ben as did it, cap'n."

"Curse him! But go on with your story."

"Waal, sir, arter Buster fired, they turned and run, an' we went fer 'em fer all we was wuth. They was mounted well, an' the'r hosses was comparative fresh, so they dropped us clean; but we held on until we struck a single trail, an' Buster tuk off on it, while we pushed ahead arter ther old man an' his darter."

"Waal, captain, we got throwed off ther trail when dark come, but we heerd a shot an' went thet way, and thar we found ther old man on his back about ter pass in his chips, an' ther gal by his side, while they was surrounded by coyotes thet was about to run in on 'em when we rid up."

"The emigrant was dying, you say?"

"Yas, cap'n, fer Buster's shot hed hit him, an' he went on until he c'd go no further, an' then laid down ter tarn up his toes."

"And he died?" asked the chief, in a low, deep tone.

"Cap'n, do you mind thet thet leetle gal turned on us an' she'd 'a' bored us ef we hadn't kept off?"

"Cowards!"

"A gal kin kill, cap'n, an' so we jist hung back until we see, as we believed, Buster coming up."

"Now, cap'n, I is goin' ter tell yer how noble we was tuk in, fer thar come Buster's horse, only, when he drew up by us, it wasn't our pard as was on him."

"Who in Satan's name was it, then?"

"Ther man ther Injuns calls ther Wizard Doctor."

"By Heaven! Frank Powell, the Doctor Scout!" and the chief sprung to his feet.

"Yas, cap'n, it were him, an' he were on ther rampage wuss'n a wolf, fer he hed us kivered and gave us a invite ter hands up, which we is free to admit we accepted, seein' as who it were."

"Go on!" sternly ordered the chief, as the man paused.

"Waal, cap'n, in course he tuk ther gal's part, and jist told her ter rope us while he kept us covered."

"She begun ther work, when Buck kicked ag'in it, an' ef he hed time ter know what kilt him, I is a weepin' liar."

"The Doctor killed him?"

"Shot him through ther brain, cap'n, an' asked us ef we'd take a pill in ourn?"

"We stated as how we wasn't sickly, an' ther gal roped us."

"Then ther Doc tied us as yer seen us come inter camp—told us he hed kilt Buster, an' s'pected ter be at our passin' away with a rope about our necks."

"And he may be, too," remarked the chief with a laugh.

"I'm a-hopin' I won't be thar, ef he is."

"Well, to your story."

"Thar hain't much more ter tell, cap'n, for ther Doc were called ter look arter ther old man, an' they was all so tuk up with what he war a-sayin', thet my pard an' me jist concluded ter light out, an' we jist did it on ther quiet like."

"This is a strange story you tell me, men, and I am glad to know it, for I shall at once break camp and go in pursuit of the girl and that famous Doctor Scout, who, I learn, is determined to take my scalp. Sound boots and saddles, Brick, and we'll take the trail."

In obedience, the negro took from a tree, where it was hanging, a small silver bugle, and the notes rung in many an echo through the timber, and roused the outlaws to busy action.

In less than ten minutes the command was ready to move, and giving his orders to the negro, to go to a certain rendezvous with half of the men and the pack-horses, the chief and half a score of the band, with three bloodhounds tied to his stirrup, started off, under the guidance of Slick Sam, to the spot where he and his comrade had left the dying emigrant.

CHAPTER XII.

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

HAVING introduced more particularly to the reader the Red Angel band of outlaws, I will bring to his mind the fact that, in their pursuit of the Doctor Scout and Janette, they were observed to halt at the stream and then dismount, as though having given up the chase.

Unconscious of their real motive Doctor Powell rode on with Janette, heading northward.

The prairie to the northward of the stream was lower than beyond it on the other side, and far more rolling and broken, while one in the timber, where the outlaws were, could see far ahead of the outlook of the Doctor Scout.

It had been by no means the intention of the Red Angel chief to give up the chase of the fugitives; but, just as he was about to leave the timber and cross the stream, his quick eye fell upon something that riveted his gaze to a point a mile beyond the Doctor.

"That 'something' he gazed at fixedly for a while, and then muttered:

"Sioux!"

"Yas, cap'n, an' thar is half a hundred of 'em," joined in Slick Sam.

"Dismount, men, and seek the shelter of the timber, for we have not been discovered yet."

In obedience to the command of their leader the men quickly dismounted and hunted cover, while Captain Kit, as he was familiarly called by his band, took a field-glass from its case and turned it upon the Indians.

They were fully a mile and a half distant from the timber, and just coming over a roll in the prairie, stretched out in a scattered line.

"Fully sixty in number, and the Doctor Scout does not see them, nor do they see him, and they will ride almost upon each other before they make the discovery."

"And what then?" said the chief, speaking aloud, but to himself, for his men were a little apart from him.

With considerable interest he noticed the Doctor Scout riding leisurely along toward the rise in the prairie before him that hid the Indians from his view, while they, little dreaming of foes near, were coming toward the stream.

The nature of the ground on either side of the Doctor Scout was such that the Red Angels saw that he could not turn either to the right or left, if he retraced his way upon seeing the Indians, without coming back to within a few rods of the stream.

There the land was unbroken, and he could fly up or down the stream; but to gain this point he would have to come within easy range of the outlaws in the timber.

"With the Indians before you, and the Red Angels behind you, my gallant Wizard Doctor, you are between two fires, one of which must burn you, for, with all your skill as a plainsman, your fame as a reckless rider and dead shot, you have no escape, and have coolly run into a trap," and the chief kept his eyes upon the receding fugitives as he spoke, occasionally turning his glass upon the coming warriors. "No, one can run over that land to the right and left of him and he has either to come back here, or attempt to cut through the Indians' line. Which will he do? I hope he will come this way, for, at all hazards, I must capture that girl, so I will dash out to his rescue—yes, rescue him from the red-skins to have him die as I wish him to die."

After a silence of a few moments, he continued:

"Those Indians are well mounted and armed, and it will be no easy thing for us to beat them

back; but then we have the timber and this bend in the river in our favor and these give us a great advantage. But, whatever the odds, I will risk them to capture that girl."

After a few more minutes of silence, the chief called out in a voice that reached the ears of his followers from their shelter:

"Men, look to your arms and your saddle-girths, for if that man runs back upon us we must take him and the girl, and if the Indians capture them we must rescue them. Remember, the Doctor Scout and girls are not to be hurt under any circumstances."

A chorus of voices answered that they heard his orders, and having looked to his own weapons and horse, the chief again turned to gaze at the Doctor Scout and his charge.

"I wish to have my glass on him when he sees the Indians," he muttered.

The red-skins were now ascending the slight elevation upon one side, and had contracted their line, on account of the broken nature of the ground and were riding more in single file, while Frank Powell, with Janette by his side and the led horse trotting along behind, was almost at the top of the gently-sloping hill.

A few more paces and suddenly a shout of warning went up from an Indian throat and the whole body huddled quickly toward the top of the hill.

It was evident that the Doctor Scout had been taken by surprise, not expecting to see Indians just there.

He had caught sight of the feather head-dress of the chief, who was leading, just as the red-skin's eyes fell upon him, and he had quietly drawn rein without the slightest show of excitement and said calmly:

"We are between two fires, Janette."

"Oh, we are lost!" cried the girl, as she saw a number of Indians dashing into view.

"No, indeed; we are only in a tight place."

"Come! we must go back."

"Back into those vile outlaws' power?" she asked, with intense surprise.

"Not if we can help doing so; but I need not disguise from you that our danger is great, and we must take the chances most in our favor to escape."

"See, the Indians are preparing for a rush upon us, so we must run for it, as soon as I have given them a hint not to crowd us."

She saw him raise his rifle quickly to his shoulder, and with the report, a warrior fell from his pony.

"Now, come," said the Doctor Scout, in tones utterly unmoved, and away they dashed back toward the timber, the led horse following close on the heels of his mates.

That they were between two fires, in fact, in a desperate situation, Frank Powell made no effort to conceal from the young girl, for he felt that she could fully realize all.

That the Red Angels were not visible in the timber he knew was no sign that they had gone, and a glance about him showed plainly the nature of the ground, and he was aware they had seen the Indians a long way off, and that this had accounted for their not crossing the river to keep up the chase.

The Indians, Powell was also aware, had not caught sight of the outlaws, and they little dreamed that foes were concealed in the timber as they came dashing along in full pursuit of the fugitives, yelling like demons, maddened as they were by the death of their comrade at the Doctor Scout's hands.

Straight toward the timber Frank Powell held his way, Janette riding by his side, and wondering how the daring man could extricate himself and her from the dangers that now surrounded them.

But she held faith in his powers and kept up her nerve, while she quietly asked:

"Do you not think the outlaws are in the timber?"

"Yes, they are there."

"And can we not turn off to the right or left here?"

"No, Janette, for those ravines that you see on either side are impassable, and we will not be able to turn off until we get within a hundred yards of the river."

"And then, sir?"

"Then we can go down the river-bank."

"But the outlaws?"

"They will doubtless attempt to check us, but we must dash through them; but let me tell you now, Janette, should any accident befall me, you keep right on down the stream."

"And desert you?"

"Oh, don't mind me, but think of your own fate, for if I should fall, your remaining would not help me, while you would be lost."

"Do as I tell you, keep right on down the river for some miles and you will come to a well-defined trail leading northward."

"Follow that and it will bring you to a ranch where lives my friend."

"Tell him that I sent you, and let him know your story, and you will find a home."

"But we must ride faster, for the red-skins are gaining."

They quickened the pace of their horses, which were not at their top speed, and in a few more moments would have reached the plain

where they could turn off when suddenly, out of the timber, right in the stream to cut them off dashed Red Angel and his men.

"Janette, now comes the death-struggle, for the Sioux are close on our heels and Captain Hyena, yonder, wants us, too," said the Wizard Doctor, as he drew a revolver in either hand and rode straight toward the outlaw band.

CHAPTER XIII.

RUNNING THE GANTLET.

As Doctor Powell settled himself firmly in his saddle, and drew a revolver in each hand, Janette glanced into his face to read there any hope that he might feel that they would safely run the gantlet of the outlaws.

But as well might she have looked upon a marble face, as not a shadow was there to express fear, or an expression that she could read as hopeful.

But a reckless smile played about the lips, and his eyes were full of the fire of determination to do or die.

It was very evident that their situation was desperate, and poor Janette cried earnestly:

"Oh, sir, you can escape; so do so, and leave me to my fate, for my life is not worth all this struggle, and I will be content to rest yonder in a grave beside my murdered father."

"Why, my little Janette, don't lose your grip and nerve, for there is no need of it until we are whipped in the struggle."

"Keep close to my side, and ride on through thick and thin!" and the Doctor spoke in a voice that gave her hope, it was so soft and gentle, being wholly devoid of any dread of the consequences.

She glanced furtively behind her at the Indians.

They were coming swiftly on, though momentarily they had checked their horses, evidently believing that more white horsemen were to come out of the timber, when the outlaws dashed forth.

That the Red Angels were coming to the rescue of the man and maiden flying before them, the Indians did not doubt; but seeing that they were so few, they again pushed forward to sweep over them.

Having seen that the red-skins had no intention of halting, Janette turned her gaze again upon the outlaws.

They had crossed the river, and with their daring chief at their head, were charging forward to cut them off before they reached the level place where they could dash down the stream along the bank.

Ravines were on either side of them, and it was yet a hundred yards to the turning-place, while the Red Angels were fully that distance away from it, too.

The Doctor Scout was pushing ahead at the utmost speed of Janette's horse, which was not as fast as his own, and was striving to make the turn around the end of the ravine before the outlaws got there.

Once he could do this and it would become, in sea parlance, a "stern chase," and he felt that he could check the Red Angels momentarily with his revolvers, and thus gain a slight lead, which he could readily increase with their horses, tired as they were.

That Captain Kit did not care to trust himself too far from the timber, was also very evident, for he wished to be able to retreat rapidly to shelter should the red-skins keep on their headlong charge.

With a nerve born of the cool mien, almost indifference, in fact, of the Doctor Scout, Janette took the entire situation in all its risks and chances.

Noting the desire of her preserver to reach the head of the ravine before the outlaws, she urged her horse to a greater speed, and her heart seemed in her throat when she saw that in a few more bounds they would reach there, while the Red Angels were yet further off than they were.

Frank Powell had placed himself upon the danger side of the young girl, and kept close to her, while he rode upright in his saddle, his reins hanging on the saddle-horn, and his hands grasping his revolvers.

If he could only round the head of the ravine before the Red Angels, he would open a fire upon them with his well-tried weapons that would surprise them for its rapidity and deadly effect.

Nearer and nearer all, fugitives, outlaws and Indians, drew to the climax, and breathlessly the white men pressed toward the dread ordeal, while the Indians came yelling behind the Doctor Scout and the girl like a pack of wolves.

Another bound of their horses would take the Doctor and Janette to the head of the ravine; but another bound of Captain Kit's animal would bring him there also.

Janette saw the outlaw chief well now, observed even in that awful moment his dandy attire, and marked his long, golden curls, blonde mustache, and the crimson wings that he wore as a mask.

She saw also the two men who had run to earth her father and herself, and the others of the band, and she felt that one man, dare what he might, could never successfully meet such odds.

As this thought flashed through her mind, up

went the Doctor Scout's right hand, and as it reached the level there came the crack of his pistol.

Backward from his saddle fell the famous Red Angel chief, and his horse sped on riderless.

But quick as a flash a second shot followed, and an outlaw's horse went down.

"Now, Janette, wheel sharp to the left and we are saved," said the Doctor Scout, in a clear voice that held no quiver in it.

At the shots of the Doctor the Indian pursuers were wholly taken aback and ceased their yells, for they told them that the white horsemen were not coming to the rescue of the flying man and young girl, but were, like them, the foes of those two, and were seeking the capture.

To the outlaws the shots rung forebodingly, for they saw their chief go down, a horse follow, and escape seemed before the daring soldier-surgeon and annihilation to themselves, with the red-skins coming swiftly down upon them.

Thus feeling, one of their number raised his revolver and fired.

"Oh God!"

The cry broke from Janette, as her horse stumbled, staggered, and she saw that he was hard hit.

But they had rounded the ravine, and as the animal swayed wildly, while plunging along, Janette felt a strong arm about her waist, and she was dragged to the saddle of the Doctor Scout, who had slipped behind it to give her the place.

The noble white did not seem to feel his double load, and Frank Powell wheeled half-round to open upon his pursuers, when he saw that they were preparing to fire upon him.

Quick as a flash he slipped to the ground, urging his horse on with a blow, while he called out:

"Go on, Janette, and do not mind me."

Relieved of his weight, the white steed gave a bound forward, and in his excitement and alarm unheeded the tugging on his reins of the young girl, who had almost lost her presence of mind at the act of her brave preserver.

Finding it impossible to check the flying animal, and hearing several shots in rapid succession, Janette turned to look behind her, and the sight she saw she never forgot.

There, standing at bay, and with his foes crowding upon him, stood the Doctor Scout, upright, calm and fearless, while the Indians, only a few hundred yards distant, were rushing toward the scene to end the unequal battle by joining in the *melee*.

Sickened at the sight, the poor girl covered her face with her hands to shut it out from before her eyes; but a wild shout caused her to again look back, and she no longer beheld that upright form battling against cruel odds, for the brave man was being dragged by his enemies rapidly toward the river, whether dead or dying the girl knew not, and upon the flying outlaws the Sioux were charging with terrific yells.

CHAPTER XIV.

JANETTE'S FLIGHT.

It was certainly a most critical moment for Janette, when she found herself alone upon the white horse, whose rider had slipped from his back and stood at bay among his foes.

Try as she would, she could not check the mad flight of the animal, and she was quickly borne from the scene, which had disappeared from sight when she a second time looked behind her.

Almost overcome, she fairly reeled in the saddle, and for a moment seemed as though about to fall.

But suddenly she broke forth with the cry, almost savagely uttered:

"No, no, I will not yield to a woman's weakness."

"I will be strong, ay, strong as a man, for there are two to be avenged now!"

The last words she spoke in a tone hoarse with suppressed emotion, and, having formed the desperate resolve to avenge her father and the Doctor Scout, she sat bolt upright in her saddle, and her face became strangely stern for one so beautiful.

And beautiful the face certainly was, for the features were refined, and yet strongly cut, the eyes great liquid wells of blue beneath the long, sweeping black lashes, and her complexion as pure as a lily.

Her hair was, as I have said, a mass of golden curls, and her form was strangely perfect for a girl who was just entering her sixteenth year.

A startling resolve was it for a young girl to make, that she would be avenged for the death of her father and, as she believed, the Doctor Scout, her brave preserver, at the hands of the cruel Red Angel band.

And more strange it seemed when the resolve fell from the lips of a girl who was then on a runaway horse, flying for her life, and wholly alone upon the vast, wild prairie.

After a rapid run of a few miles, the ford across the river came in view, and with the broad, well-defined trail running northward, which the Doctor Scout had spoken of as the one she should take.

The white horse seemed now willing to be controlled; as no danger threatened, and she drew him down to a walk, while she became lost in deep thought after once turning into the trail as she had been directed.

At a swinging walk, a five-mile gait, the animal went along for perhaps a mile, when he suddenly gave a snort and a quick bound that unseated Janette and she fell from her saddle.

But, as nimble as an athlete, she caught on her feet unhurt, while she also retained her presence of mind sufficiently to grasp the rein tightly and hold to it.

The frightened horse pulled back for an instant, and Janette gave a hasty glance around to see what had startled him.

What she saw caused her heart to leap with terror, and, with the strength of despair, she gave a bound, grasped the saddle-horn, and drew herself upward.

Away rushed the white steed, she clinging to the saddle-horn, and in vain struggling to get her foot in the stirrup, and thus manage to seat herself in the saddle, while, just out of range of their arrows, came a dozen painted warriors at full speed, and their yells, to terrify the girl, and cause her to lose her grip, were fearful, and enough to cause dismay in the stoutest heart.

Even in her danger Janette took in the situation at a glance, knowing that the Indians belonged to the same band that she and the Doctor Scout had nearly ridden upon, and had pushed on after her, leaving their comrades to deal with the outlaws.

Following her down the river, they had seen her turn to the left upon reaching the trail, and, cutting across the prairie, had come over a divide almost upon her.

This it was that had startled the white horse so, and but for Janette's activity and presence of mind her fate would have been to fall into the hands of the red-skins right there.

As the horse ran along with the poor girl clinging to the saddle, and the Indians rushing after with wild yells and the clatter of hoofs, it was a sight to appall any heart but a savage's and Janette almost lost her hold.

But from between her shut teeth came the words:

"I will not fall off! I will cling on until the last, and live for revenge!"

Thus again stimulated, Janette clung on, still struggling to get her foot in the stirrup and thus save herself.

At last, just as she felt that she could not retain her hold more than a minute longer, the toe of her boot touched the stirrup, and as she drew up and seated herself in the saddle, she could not repress the cry of triumph that welled up from her heart—a cry that was echoed by a shout of rage from the red-skins, who, up to that instant, had felt sure of their game.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DEATH SHOT.

HAMPERED by the weight of the girl on one side of him, the noble white horse had not been able to keep up his speed, and the result was that the Indian ponies had gained on him considerably, until, when Janette succeeded in getting into the saddle, they were within bow-shot range.

Seeing the possibility now of their victim escaping them, as the white began to drop them once more, they sent a shower of arrows flying after her.

Nearly all of them flew wild, but one cut through her slouch riding-hat, and another buried itself in the hind leg of the white.

With a snort of rage and pain he bounded forward at an increased speed; but, ere he had gone far, Janette sadly realized the fact that he was really hurt, for his leg was bleeding freely, and though he had placed himself barely out of range, by his short spurt of speed after being wounded, he dropped back to a pace that did not gain any on the pursuers.

Anxiously Janette looked ahead of her, and her eyes fell upon a roll of the prairie, much higher than the surrounding land, and upon it was a timber grove several acres in size.

A fringe of cottonwood and willows, leading to and from the timber, marked the outline of a stream, and upon the banks she saw with joy a herd of cattle.

They were not buffalo, or elk, but cattle, as she could plainly see, though yet a long way off.

They betokened that a ranch was near, and peering into the timber, she beheld the outline of houses, and her heart throbbed with hope.

"It is the ranch that Doctor Powell directed me to. But can I have ridden so far? Come, old horse, bear up and save me now, for help lies yonder," and she patted the struggling horse kindly.

Thus encouraged, he made another effort, and for half a mile increased his speed, but glancing back once more Janette saw that the red-skins were steadily gaining.

They were stretched out in a line half a mile in length, according to the speed of their horses, and, seeing the ranch also, they were laying their quirts viciously upon their ponies, to urge them on after the flying white.

Fascinated by the sight, it was some time before Janette again turned her gaze upon the scene ahead.

Instantly she saw that a change had taken place.

The cattle were going at a run for the timber, and behind them several horsemen were urging them on, while directly toward her, seemingly having just left the ranch, came four other horsemen to her rescue.

"No, not yet, not yet must I die," she muttered through her shut teeth, and she again looked back at the Indians.

As she did so, her horse stumbled, recovered himself, and again stumbling, fell heavily to the ground.

Warned of his going down, Janette was ready for it, and gathering her skirt about her, she saved herself from a severe fall.

But hardly had her feet touched the ground, when she sprang to the side of the fallen horse, and seized the repeating rifle that hung there, while she sunk down upon her knees, using the body of the animal as a shield, and facing the coming red-skins, with the words:

"The chances are that the Indians reach me first; but I will not throw a single precious shot away," and she smiled grimly as she spoke, though her face was white and her lips quivered.

It was a chance in favor of the Indians getting the girl, for they came swiftly on, and if not checked by her fire, would ride right down upon her, and be on the retreat before the ranchmen could come up.

Seeing this, they pressed on the more rapidly, urging their tired ponies to the utmost, and, in wild admiration at the pluck of the girl, the white horsemen drove their rowels deep to save her.

Glancing backward Janette saw that the ranchmen were yet a long way off, though coming on at break-neck speed, and also she discovered that those who had been driving in the cattle, had now turned about to her rescue.

Looking at her foes she was glad to see that they were well strung out, one Indian being a hundred lengths in advance of the others, and then from twenty to sixty feet dividing those that followed behind.

The leader was a chief, mounted on a spotted pony, and certainly a most beautiful animal it was, being marked as prettily as a zebra, while he ran along with ease, the only one of the pursuing horses that his rider was not urging with quirt and voice.

In truth, Janette saw that the chief was holding his pony back, being already further in advance of his warriors than he seemed to desire, under the circumstances of the ranchman coming to the rescue.

"That befeathered and besmeared savage is in for it," she muttered, as she held the Doctor's repeating rifle ready, though out of sight of the Indians.

The white horse was dying, only nervously twitching at times, having really bled until his strength failed him and he could hold up no longer.

His body, with the high Mexican saddle, stirrups and stirrup-leathers thrown over his back, made a good breastwork for the girl, and she knelt down so as to receive the best protection from it.

Thus several moments, moments of awful suspense to the girl, passed away, and the leading chief was within easy range, while the ranchmen were yet a quarter of a mile away.

One look she cast over her shoulder and her eyes brightened as she saw other horsemen, five in number, just leaving the timber, the third party that was coming to her rescue, and making ten in number.

"If I can check the Indians, those brave men will soon put them to flight, if they are two to five against them," muttered Janette, drawing her conclusions from what she had seen of the battles between the whites and red-skins in coming across the prairies.

"Now may Heaven help me," she said, tremulously, as it came time for her to fire.

But conquering her momentary weakness, she raised her rifle to her shoulder, took a deliberate aim and fired.

The chief had evidently not dreamed of her having a rifle, and when she raised it, his eyes were doubtless upon the distant ranchmen.

But wandering back to the coveted prize once more, he suddenly saw a weapon leveled full at him and held as firmly as though at the shoulder of an old Indian-fighter.

Quickly he threw himself over on the side of his pony, but not quick enough to escape the shot, and to get full in the forehead a bullet that would have, but for his change of position, struck him in the thigh.

Stone-dead he dropped to the ground, while Janette, overwhelmed by what she had done, as quickly dropped the rifle and covered her face with her hands, while she murmured:

"God forgive me, I have taken the life of a human being!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RANCHERO AND HIS SABLE COWBOYS.

THE weakness of Janette, shown for a moment, after seeing the chief fall under her aim,

well-nigh proved fatal to her, for three warriors next behind him poured upon her a shower of arrows, several of which buried themselves in the body of the dying horse.

Even the yells of rage of the Indians and thuds of arrows as they struck, failed to arouse her; but then arose one prolonged shout of warning from the ranchmen, and a manly voice cried:

"Fire again, my brave girl!"

Thus recalled to herself and her great peril, Janette started, brushed the tears from her eyes and again grasped her rifle, and not a moment too soon, for the next warrior was almost upon her.

Quickly she raised the weapon, took aim hastily and fired.

Headlong forward to the prairie fell the Indian pony, and quick as was his rider, he could not save himself from a heavy fall, which momentarily stunned him.

Seeing the fate of their leading companions, and hearing the loud shouts of triumph from the ranchmen, who were now drawing very near, the Indians hastily drew rein, and arrow after arrow was sent at the intrepid girl.

"Down! down for your life!" shouted the same manly voice, anticipating the act of the red-skins, and instinctively Janette obeyed, dropping down behind the horse, while the arrows flew over her head, stuck in the prairie upon either side, or found a target in the body of the dead animal.

Under cover of this firing from his comrades, the Indian whose pony Janette had shot sprung to his feet and dashed back to join his brother braves.

But he had not made half a dozen bounds before an arrow went whizzing above the girl's head and found a lodging-place in his heart, killing him instantly.

The next moment the advance party of ranchmen dashed by, and the leader cried out:

"Courage, my noble girl, and we will give the red devils a lesson they will not soon forget."

The speaker was a man advanced in years, for his beard and hair were white, the latter hanging far down his back.

But he sat his horse superbly, and rode with the air one who did not feel his years.

Seeing the advance of the ranchmen, who, they had hoped, would be content in rescuing the maiden, the Indians began to retreat, for they knew that their ponies were tired out, and that they were hardly a match, even on fresh horses, for half their number of well-armed and mounted foes.

Pressing on, the ranchmen opened fire, and the others coming up, a line was formed, and shot after shot was poured upon the retreating and sullen Indians, who uttered howls of rage when they saw a warrior or pony fall, while their arrows were falling short and doing no harm.

Having driven the red-skins for a mile or more, and having punished them severely, the leader of the ranchmen left his men to still dog their steps as they retreated, and rode hastily back to where Janette awaited him, and who, in the mean time, caught the handsome spotted pony of the Sioux chief she had killed.

The animal had made no effort to fly at her approach, and looked as though she had done him an especial favor in slaying his savage rider, for he rubbed his nose affectionately against her shoulder.

Just then the ranchero rode up, and said in a cheerful voice:

"A pretty picture, upon my honor, and you have surely won the pony, miss, and the chief's scalp too."

"The former you have taken already, so allow me to offer the latter, which I took for you, and few girls can claim the honor of such a trophy."

"Oh, sir, I would not touch it for the world," and Janette drew back from the hideous trophy.

"Certainly not, my child, if you do not wish it; but out here we scalp an Indian to be sure that he is dead; but you look pale and worn, and I must look to your comfort, and find out how it is you are alone here on the prairie."

"My name is Monkton, miss—Oliver Monkton, a Nebraska cattle-man, wholly at your service, as is also my home, my pocketbook and my friendship, if you stand in need of any of those necessities of life."

"Indeed, I do need a friend, sir, for I am alone in the world, and only last night my father was murdered, and to-day, two hours ago, one who proved so noble, so kind to me, was slain, and I have had a race for my life, and I owe it to you that I too am not dead," and the tears filled the beautiful eyes.

"My poor, dear child, you have indeed suffered deeply; but you are not friendless, I assure you, for I am alone in the world, living yonder with only my men, and you shall be my daughter, my ward."

"Come, let me aid you to mount your spotted prize, and we will ride at once to your new home, and you can tell me all that has happened."

He lifted her to the Indian saddle on the spotted mustang, and then said:

"I will leave my boys to bring your saddle."

"It is not mine, sir, for my horse was slain,

and my brave preserver took me on his own horse."

"Ah! I should know that saddle, for there is not another like it on the plains. It is Powell's!" cried the old ranchero, excitedly.

"Yes, sir, it was Doctor Frank Powell who rescued me."

"Great God! do you mean that Powell is dead?"

In a few words Janette told the ranchero all that had happened since the attack upon the emigrant train by the Red Angels.

He listened with the deepest interest, and then said:

"Did you see Powell slain, my child?"

"No, sir; but they were dragging him toward the river when I saw him last."

"Ah! that gives me hope, for unless you saw him dead I cannot believe it, and if he lives he will escape."

"You see, my child, that Doctor Scout, as we call him, has had so many hair-breadth escapes, and is so thoroughly able to take care of himself that I cannot believe but what he will continue to do so, and I shall look for him to turn up, and if he does he will come to my ranch, for I am the one he sent you to— Ah! my boys are coming back, I see, and it is well, for they are not strong enough to meet a large force of red-skins, such as you say were over on the Dis-mal River."

After a little while the returning horsemen came up, and Janette then noticed with surprise, what before she had not observed, they were cowboys, well-armed, mounted and dressed in buckskin and sombreros, but they were negroes!

CHAPTER XVII.

PRAIRIE REST RANCH.

HAVING learned from his sable cowboys that they had returned on account of seeing a number of Indians coming to join those they were driving, the ranchero started for his home in the timber, Janette riding by his side and the negroes following after, as soon as they had buried the Indians at their master's order, and stripped the white horse of his trappings.

Approaching the prairie home, Janette noticed that it was most delightfully situated upon the banks of a beautiful stream, and in the midst of a large grove of timber.

As I have before stated, the prairie here arose to almost a hill in height, and the approach on three sides was open, while the fourth side was guarded by the river.

A stockade wall ran around the timber, and inclosed a space along the river-bank, where cattle could be driven in case of danger, and wherein were then several hundred head, with sixty or seventy ponies and a few fine American horses.

A few barns, stacks of prairie hay, and a large vegetable garden were passed on the way to the ranchero's home, which was a large cabin built of logs and containing four rooms.

Upon one side were several smaller cabins where the negroes dwelt, and altogether there was an air of comfort, and almost luxury about the place seldom seen in a far Western ranch.

But right there had Oliver Monkton pitched his tent three years before, having come from the South with his negro following, and who had once been his slaves, but preferred to stick to their old master though he journeyed far toward the land of the setting sun.

"Here I live, my child, with a score of my faithful servants, and we have proven ourselves so well able to take care of our property that the red-skins and even the outlaws let us alone, now."

"And you are happy here, sir?" said Janette, more in affirmation than as a question.

"Contented, if not happy, my child," and a shadow stole over the old man's face.

But he added quickly:

"You see I have four rooms, and am not uncomfortable, so, with the sunshine of your presence I will be happy, for this is your home now, remember."

"It is such a home as my father hoped to have some day built up out in this prairie land; but, sir, as poor papa is dead and you have promised to take his place, most gladly will I accept your generous hospitality."

"There, bear up Janette, my child, and be strong."

"See, here is old Auntie Phoebe, my life-long friend and housekeeper, and she will look after your comfort, while I see what these red-skins are doing."

"See, Auntie Phoebe, I have found a daughter upon the prairie, and you must do for her as you have for my poor loved ones that have gone."

Auntie Phoebe was one of those dear old souls so often met with in Southern families, and she said, kindly:

"Lor' bress your sweet soul, chile, I take keer ob you same as ef yer was ole massa's darter an' my own pickaninny, an' ole Phoebe mighty glad ter welcome you ter dis new plantashun, which, ef it hain't like de ole place on de Marsersip, am not so bad, for we gits plenty ter eat an' sich—Hole on, ole massa, don't you git reckless goin' arter dem red nigger Injuns, jist 'cause yer hes

got a new dorter an' thinks yer is young ag'in," and old Phoebe called out to her master, as he left the cabin to ride off at the head of his black cowboys to see if the red-skins intended any hostile demonstration against his ranch.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BLACK COWBOYS' GIRL CAPTAIN.

AS soon as Major Monkton had ridden away, for the ranchero had won his military title in the Mexican war, old Phoebe looked after the welfare of Janette with all the tenderness a mother could have shown.

Janette was worn out and hungry, for she had had nothing to eat since the evening before, it will be remembered, and Phoebe soon prepared for her a most tempting meal, the poor girl the meanwhile glad to pour into sympathetic ears the story of her sorrows.

"Po' chile, you has indeed had troubles; but you is all right now, honey, and I is mighty glad massa hab found you, for he done hab a dorter onst, but she got married and go 'way, and die ob a broken heart, 'cause de man she lub was bad gambler an' treat her awful. Massa kill him in a duel, chile, which sarve him right; but den it didn't fotch poor Missy Kate back ag'in, an' massa hab always wear de hurt in his heart."

"But, chile, you wants clo'es, an' you shall hab 'em, for massa hab a trunkful here de dress-maker send for Missy Kate, an' she die afore she eber got 'em."

"But I cannot think of taking them, my dear Auntie Phoebe, for—"

"Now, chile, I is de boss o' dis house, an' you hab to do as I says, for ef you is massa's dorter, an' he says so, den you hab de right to wear his dorter's clo'es."

Remonstrance was in vain with Aunt Phoebe, so Janette soon appeared greatly refreshed, after a bath and with fresh clothes on her that fitted her as though they had been made for her.

After dinner she threw herself into a shuck hammock, ingeniously woven by old Uncle Ike, the husband of Phoebe, and was soon in deep slumber.

But it was only a short while before she was awakened by the trampling of hoofs, and up dashed several of the negro ranchmen, crying in great alarm that their master had been captured by the Indians, his horse having been shot, and falling upon him had pinned him to the ground.

"Where are the remainder of your men?" cried Janette, quickly springing from the hammock.

"Dey is watchin' de Injuns, missy, while we comed back for ammunition and provisions so's we c'u'd foller 'em an' sabe massa."

"Get ready in all haste then, and I will lead you to his rescue!" cried Janette, in tones that startled even herself, and in a few minutes she came from the house once more attired in her riding-habit and hat, and having a belt of arms strapped around her slender waist.

The spotted pony had been saddled for her, Uncle Ike dragging out from its hiding-place the side-saddle that had once belonged to his young mistress, and springing to her seat, the daring girl shot off from the cabin, the sable horsemen at her heels, and followed by the prayers of the negroes remaining on the ranch.

After a rapid gallop of a few miles, Janette rode over a roll of the prairie, to discover the remainder of the negro ranchmen slowly following upon the trail of a small band of Indians, in the midst of whom she beheld the white-haired prisoner tied securely to a pony.

A glance showed her that they were the same red-skins who had pursued her, with the addition of a dozen more who had joined them, and whose coming had emboldened them to turn against their foes, and slowly follow the ranchmen back toward the ranch.

Zip, the leader of the sable troop, and a stalwart, fine-looking young fellow, with a fearless face and iron muscle, told her that the coming back of his master and his men had checked the advance of the Indians and caused them to retreat.

Arriving at a ravine, the Indians had suddenly turned and charged, and though they beat them off, his master's horse got beyond control, and, dashing away with him, fell under the fire of the red-skins, and the major, though he fought a hand-to-hand fight, was captured and borne off.

"We must rescue him, Zip, even if they are thirty and we but thirteen," said Janette, firmly.

"We will charge 'em if you say so, missy, won't we, boys?" was Zip's brave response, and his words met with a hearty affirmative.

Janette smiled, and looked carefully over the sable command which she so suddenly had taken the captaincy of. She saw a dozen as fine-looking specimens of physical manhood as her eyes had ever before beheld. Their faces were black, but their hearts were fearless, and they were a daring band of men to meet in combat. They were all splendidly mounted, rode well, and were armed with a rifle, pair of revolvers and a knife each. In their broad-brimmed light sombreros, buckskin hunting-shirts, cavalry boots and spurs, they presented a dangerous and

striking appearance, and Janette, now wholly reckless to personal danger, felt no dread in leading them to the rescue of their master.

"Come on; and we will charge the Indians. Use your rifles first, pour a standing fire, but be careful in your aim not to harm Major Monkton! then draw your revolvers and follow me."

"We'll be there, missy, nebber fear," responded Zip, enthusiastically.

Having decided upon her course, Janette, a young girl, who, a few weeks before, in her Eastern home, had been as gentle as a dove but whose long trip across the plains, and following scenes of carnage and sorrow had made her a perfect Amazon, now rode to the front of the sable cowboys and led the way on the Indians' trail.

The red-skins quickly saw that they were being pursued, and the determined manner of their foes caused them to hasten on, anxious to reach the shelter of some cottonwoods ahead; but this intention Zip divined and urged Janette to go at full speed, which she at once did, and the tired ponies of the Indians were quickly gained on by the fresh one in chase.

"Halt here! Aim well and fire!" cried Janette, drawing rein just in range of the Indians' arrows.

The red-skins at once came to a halt, and almost instantly raising her rifle, Janette cried:

"Fire!"

The steady rifles cracked almost together; then followed in the clear voice of the girl leader of the black cowboys the one word:

"Charge!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RESCUE.

THE volley fired by Janette and the black cowboys under her command, was thoroughly well aimed, and completely demoralized the Indians, especially as they saw their foes charging upon them at full speed.

Another circumstance to aid in the demoralization was the fact that their enemies were black men, led by a young girl, and one who had so cleverly escaped from them when they believed they had her in their power.

This band of Indians, from the northern country, had never seen a negro, though strange stories were told in their tribe regarding them.

At first they had believed them to have their faces blacked, but a red-skin who spoke English after the capture of Major Monkton, had asked him regarding them, and had been told that they were really black-skinned, with a few additional facts, or stories about them, which would have greatly surprised the colored cowboys had they heard their master's words.

What the major said was quickly interpreted by the English-speaking red-skin to his comrades, and the result was that all seemed to feel a kind of superstitious horror of the black cowboys, and would have put their white prisoner to death for thus exciting their fears, had he not, suspecting the plot, told them that the black horsemen with him were but the advance-guard of a large army that would trail them to their villages if one hair of his head was harmed.

It was in this superstitious humor that Janette found the red-skin band, and, after the deadly fire of the black cowboys, and their wild charge, it is not to be wondered at that the Indians were attacked by a panic which sent them flying over the prairie, leaving the horse to which their prisoner was tied to go flying off alone, for no one in particular seemed to have it upon his mind to take charge of the major at such a moment.

Seeing the animal dart off, Janette rode rapidly toward him, while the black cowboys pressed hard on the heels of the flying red-skins.

To catch the pony and release the major was but a few moments' work, and then taking a small bugle that hung about his neck, and which the red-skins had not robbed him of, believing it some medicine charm, the ranchero sounded a recall for his men.

It was a running fight, hotly pressed, with the advantages on the side of the sable ranchmen, for they had killed several of the red-skins, while only two or three slight wounds had been received upon their side.

Having accomplished the rescue of their master and punished the Indians, upon hearing the recall Zip gave orders for the return, and, with a shout of triumph, they went flying back over the prairie.

"Well, my dear child, we are quits, for you have saved my life," said Major Monkton, warmly, as he grasped Janette's hand, when he had sounded the recall upon his bugle.

"I am so happy to have served you, sir! but I could have done nothing without your brave men," answered Janette.

"Nor they without you, for I am confident you planned the pursuit, for Zip is reckless and would have charged in pell-mell and lost, for it was your deadly volley that hurt them, as four Indians and two ponies fell dead, and several were wounded under it."

"I tell you, Janette, that was as well-planned as any officer at the fort could have done it."

"But here are the boys and we will get back to the ranch, for I have a little wound or two

that is worth looking after, and I see several of my men have felt an arrow-point, too."

The black cowboys just then dashed up with a cheer, and the major called out:

"Well done, boys! You covered yourselves with glory that time."

"The brave young missy showed us how, sah," declared Zip.

"Well, I will appoint her as your captain in future, for I am getting too old to follow such wild riders as you are," said the major, with a smile.

"Tankee, sah! an' we is glad to hab Captain Missy; hain't we, boys?"

Zip's question was answered by a hurrah and the waving of sombreros, and the major said:

"Now, Captain Janette, you are in for it as an old man's ward and the leader of the black cowboys!"

Janette blushed, and her lips quivered; but she answered:

"I thank you, Major Monkton—"

"Father Monkton now, my child."

"Yes, sir, it shall be Father Monkton, for I feel that I have indeed found a father in place of the one I have lost."

"But, sir," and she controlled her emotion with an effort, "as we are well on our way toward the timber, where that brave doctor fell, can I take some of your men and ride there to see if we can discover any trace of his fate?"

"Certainly, my child; but, as you are worn out, let Zip take a half dozen of the boys and—"

"No, sir; I had food and a short rest, and I would feel better to go myself."

"You can, and but for the wounds several of us have received we would all go."

"But your horses are fresh, and I know Zip will not let you run into danger. Remember, Zip, Captain Janette commands you, but you are to take care of her all the same, and none of your recklessness while she is along!"

"Go, sah; I'll skedaddle ef I sees a Injun," meekly answered Zip.

"Yes, or an outlaw, too, unless he is dead."

"Come, Janette, be off at once, for it is getting late, and while you lead your band, I'll lead the cripples back to the ranch."

With wishes for her success, in learning something regarding Doctor Powell's fate, Major Monkton, who had received several painful wounds, and four of the negro cowboys, who had likewise been wounded, started for the ranch, while Janette and her eight black horsemen went at a swift gallop toward the scene where the Doctor Scout had so daringly sprung from his horse to allow her to escape.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DOCTOR SCOUT A CAPTIVE.

I WILL now return to Frank Powell, the Doctor Scout, at the time of his springing from his horse, and leaving Janette to go on alone.

The firing of the outlaws upon them, as they seemed about to round the head of the ravine in safety, showed him pretty conclusively that they would not spare the girl if they could kill or wound him.

In the nobleness of his nature, he determined to offer himself as the sacrifice, and, if not immediately slain, to trust to his own prowess, so often tried, to extricate himself.

He was no man to shield himself behind a woman.

He saw that the white horse could not carry the double weight of himself and Janette, ahead of the fastest horses of the outlaws, and, if they continued the chase, he knew that they would continue to fire upon them.

Acting from impulse, he slipped off of the back of the horse, urging him on with a slap and a cry, and stood alone in the midst of his foes!

He had made every calculation in his favor, and this at once failed him and left him at bay before the outlaws.

That calculation was to capture the led horse, the animal that had belonged to Richard Joslyn, the father of Janette.

He had raced close behind them up to the moment of the Doctor Scout's springing to the ground, and he had expected to seize his rein and mount him, after he had emptied his revolvers at the coming outlaws.

But the perverse animal wheeled far out of his reach, and turning, darted back toward the outlaws, at the very instant when he could have been of such use to the doctor.

Thus thwarted, there was nothing for it but to stand and fight it out.

Frank Powell was no novice in a stand-up fight.

He had been placed in positions a score of times when life depended upon a cool head, an iron arm, nerve and deadly aim.

He had no idea of throwing his shots away.

He saw that Janette was safe, and a glance in the direction from whence he had come showed him the Indians coming on with a rush.

The outlaws were pressing upon him, it was true, but the red-skins were pressing upon them, or would be in a few seconds, and it was whether he could stand them off and be captured by the Indians, or must go under to his worst foes, the Red Angels.

He saw all in the time of a lightning's flash,

and raising his revolver he fired, bringing down the horse of the outlaw nearest to him.

Again he fired, this time with his left hand, and a Red Angel fell from his saddle.

The ruffian rovers, in the mean time, returned the fire, but it seemed with no desire to kill or wound their foe. They felt sure of their game and wished to trap it alive.

Having shot an outlaw from his horse, the Doctor Scout saw an advantage open to him, and made a mighty spring toward the animal thus freed of his rider.

But the horse wheeled about, as though on a pivot, and the Doctor Scout was again forced to stand at bay amid the Red Angels.

But just as he was raising his revolver to send another unerring bullet upon its deadly mission, there came a whizzing sound above his head, and the coil of a lariat settled around his body, pinning his strong arms down to his side.

Like coyotes rushing upon a wounded deer, the Red Angels now ran in on their daring foe, and instantly he was dragged toward the river by the half-dozen men who seized him, for the Indians were now almost upon him.

As they dragged him along they bound him securely, and reaching the edge of the stream, he was thrown upon the back of a horse, and while a guard led the animal across, the rest of the outlaws turned to deliver a telling fire upon the Indians.

Glancing back, the Doctor saw that the volley had brought the Sioux to a sudden standstill, while another well-directed fire sent them howling out of range, their arrows falling harmlessly in the water and upon the bank.

He also saw a party of the Sioux separate themselves from the main body, and dash off in pursuit of Janette, while those who remained began work as though they had plenty of time on their hands, and a large enough number to capture the Red Angels in their own particular time and peculiar way.

"That chief is a fool," muttered the Doctor, "to delay, when if he had rushed right on and lost a few warriors, he would have ended the struggle in a few minutes. Now he can only fail in his attack, once these men gain the timber."

Having come to this conclusion, and discovered that he was, without doubt, a captive to the Red Angels, the Doctor Scout cast his eyes upon a little group that had already crossed the river and were in the timber at the spot where the emigrant, Richard Joslyn, had been buried.

As he reached the other shore he waded apart from this little group, and made to stand by a tree, to which he was firmly secured.

Then he saw his guard, and all but one of the little group referred to, go down toward the river-bank, and, ranging themselves in line, begin practice with their rifles at the red-skins.

The first few shots falling short, the Indians answered with derisive yells, and Frank Powell muttered:

"If I had my repeating-rifle here, I could make those red-skins change their tune."

He observed that the Red Angels had but eight men for duty, for one lay wounded near the grove, and another had gone off at full speed across the prairie, as though to seek aid.

After firing a few shots, which fell short, the Red Angels suddenly fired a volley, as one gun, and the bullets went rattling into the very midst of the Indians, who had drawn much nearer upon seeing that the rifles of their foes could not reach them.

A wail went up from the red-skins, who hastily scattered to a place of safety, while the outlaws yelled with delight at their trick, and the Doctor joined in the laugh at the ridiculous haste of the warriors in getting out of range, while he muttered:

"It would please me immensely to see them turn out like the Kilkenny cats!"

Having given the red-skins this lesson of what their rifles would do, all but two of the Red Angels, who remained on guard, came up to the spot where lay one of the little group that had not joined them, and who was evidently severely wounded.

After a short talk two of them came toward Powell, and one said:

"You are the Wizard Doctor, are you not?"

"My name is Frank Powell," was the reply.

"Well, you are a surgeon up at the fort?"

"Yes."

"Then there is work for you to do here."

"What is it?"

"Come, and you shall see," and unfastening the bonds that held him to the tree, they led him to the spot where lay one of their number wounded.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RED ANGELS' THREAT.

"By Heaven! but I was in hopes that I had killed you!"

The words were uttered by Frank Powell, when the outlaws fell back at his approach, and he beheld who it was that lay wounded on the ground, half-supported by the logs that had been placed over the emigrant's grave.

Frank Powell was generous, even to a foe, but his words were uttered impulsively, when he saw that a man, who had made himself a terror

and curse upon the plains, had not been killed by his shot, and the backbone of the Red Angel band thereby broken.

Instantly came the response from the wounded man, and in a tone that proved he suffered greatly:

"Your bullet was well-aimed, Doctor Powell, and has gone deep; but I am like a cat to cling to life, and am not dead yet, so sent for you to see if you could help me."

"If I let you die I will render the country a service."

"Yes, and get the reward offered for me dead or alive," responded the outlaw, with a sneer.

"No, sir, I do not trade in blood-money, nor would I accept a dollar in payment even for ridding the country of such as you are; but I do not see that I am called upon to bring you back out of the shadow of the grave."

"You refuse to help me, then?"

The Doctor Scout was silent, and stood with a far-away look in his eyes, though they rested upon the Indians on the other side of the river.

"I am suffering greatly; do you refuse to help me?"

"I will see what I can do for you, but upon conditions," and Frank Powell turned upon the wounded man, who asked:

"What are your conditions?"

"That, if I can save you, as soon as you are out of danger, you disband your men and pledge yourself to leave Nebraska."

"If I decline your conditions?"

"Then I shall rid Nebraska of you by allowing you to die."

"I refuse the conditions."

"And I refuse to serve you, Captain Hyena," was the cool reply.

"You are in my power, Doctor Powell."

"Yes, and if I am any judge, you are so seriously wounded, if something is not done for you, Death has his clutch on you."

The red wings hid the face of the man, so that expressions could not be seen, but his lips quivered and a shudder ran through his frame at the words of the surgeon.

"I do not wish to die," he said, in a low tone.

"I do not say that you will, nor can I tell; but the wound is in your left side, and without examination I can only surmise that it is most severe."

"Your skill in surgery and medicine has gained for you the title of the Wizard Doctor, I believe?"

"Yes; the soldiers and Indians so call me."

"I have often heard of your great skill in snatching wounded and sick men out of the very jaws of death, and I have faith in your power to save me."

"Faith is half the battle, Captain Hyena."

"Well, sir, having faith, I intend to place myself in your hands."

"Upon my conditions?"

"No, sir."

"What, then?"

"Upon no conditions."

"What if I refuse?"

"I will show you. Here, men!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" cried the men in chorus.

"Stand that man there."

The Doctor Scout himself stepped to the spot indicated.

"Get your rifles ready."

This order was obeyed, four of the men confronting the Doctor five paces distant, with their rifles in their hands.

Then the Red Angel chief said sternly:

"Men, unbind that Wizard Doctor, and if he refuses to extract the bullet from the wound in my side, kill him."

Frank Powell did not allow a muscle in his face to quiver at this stern order from the lips of a man hovering between life and death. He simply glanced at the men, who were to obey their chief's command, and said with the utmost calmness:

"Men, my heart lies just here, so aim true, and do not botch your work."

"Ha! that means that you prefer death!" cried the outlaw leader.

"I have never cared to shake hands with death, sir; but I will do so rather than be forced by fear to obey your order."

Captain Hyena uttered an oath. He saw that the man before him would die, rather than be intimidated, and his own critical condition alarmed him greatly, so he said:

"Well, sir, do as I bid you; save my life and I will set you free as soon as I am out of danger."

"Enough; I will do all I can on those terms; but I must not be bound, for the ropes even now unfit my hands for work where steadiness is required."

"You are right; release him, men, if he pledges himself not to make his escape until I am out of danger."

"I do."

"Then set to work, Doctor Powell, and for God's sake save my life, for I fear that we have delayed too long already."

"Don't get nervous, but keep cool and have faith," and taking his case of instruments from his belt, the Doctor Scout knelt by the side of the wounded outlaw chief.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CAPTIVE IN A NEW ROLE.

THROUGH his mask of wings the outlaw captain watched the face of Frank Powell, with an eagerness that was born of the peril of his critical situation.

"Can you bear the probe, or shall I give you chloroform?" asked the Doctor Scout, taking a small bottle from his case.

"I will bear all pain," was the reply of the outlaw, who seemed to dread being placed under the influence of the drug by the surgeon.

Then, when Powell turned to select certain instruments, he called one of his men to his side and whispered earnestly to him:

"It shall be as you say, sir," answered the man, who was an under officer of the outlaw.

"See to it, Van," said the chief, and then he nerved himself to hear the worst, as Doctor Powell again turned to him.

"The bullet has gone in deep," remarked the surgeon, as he inserted the probe, the wounded man uttering no cry.

"I know it, and the wonder is, having been fired by you, that it did not kill me instantly."

"True; I seldom have to do my pistol work over a second time," was the cool reply, and then he added, with a smile:

"I am in this case undoing my work; but have no fear, Captain Kit, for I shall do my best for you."

The probe was again inserted in the wound, and the skillful manipulation of Frank Powell not only found the bullet, but drew it forth, the wounded man bearing the anguish occasioned thereby with set teeth, but without a groan.

"There is the bullet, sir; keep it as a souvenir," and the Doctor Scout handed the deadly little ball of lead to the patient, who took it and asked:

"Will it kill me?"

"It has touched no necessarily vital part, but has left an ugly wound."

"And you can save me?"

"I think so, if nothing unforeseen occurs to prevent."

"Thank you, Doctor Powell, and trust even the word of an outlaw that you will never regret your act."

"Others will, though, I am afraid," and the remark and smile was lost upon the chief.

As kindly and skillfully as though he was serving a dear friend Frank Powell dressed the wound and made the chief easy upon a blanket bed he had spread for him.

Hardly had this been done when Van the sub-officer before referred to, approached and said:

"I am sorry to trouble you, chief; but the Indians are preparing to cross the river at three different points of the bend, and in equal forces."

"Well, I can only lie here and let them scalp me, if you allow them to cross."

"We cannot prevent them I fear, sir."

"Well, stand like antelopes, and let them shoot you down," peevishly said the chief.

"Pardon me, my man, but your chief must not be worried, for he is in no condition to stand it," warned the Doctor Scout.

"But what is to be done, sir?" asked the man with a certain respect he could not deny the prisoner.

"If you ask me, and, as Captain Kit is unfit for duty, I will very quickly tell you, for I have no desire to be scalped by the Sioux, I assure you."

"Do so, and take command, Doctor, for your life, as well as ours, depends upon keeping those red-skins at bay. Van, you and the men are to obey Doctor Powell as you would me."

"I think I am next to you in rank, Captain Kit, and should not be placed under a prisoner's command," hotly said the outlaw officer.

Frank Powell smiled, and then said in his low, musical tones:

"My dear sir, I assure you I have no desire to command a band of cut-throats; but the exigencies of the case demand prompt action to save us all, and, for myself, I do not intend that a coward shall lead me into danger."

"Do you call me a coward, sir?" and the man dropped his hand upon his revolver.

"I call any man a coward who, in danger, turns to a wounded, almost dying chief to extricate him. Take your hand off that pistol, for I am unarmed, and you but prove yourself the greater coward in threatening me."

"By Heaven, Van, he has you there, and I appoint the Wizard Doctor to command in my place, for if any man can save us, he can; so, now, get to your post, and if you give any more trouble, I'll see that the Doctor is put on an equal footing with you, as far as weapons are concerned."

This threat cowed the man, and he walked away, but was recalled by the Doctor with:

"You sent a messenger off for reinforcements, I believe?"

"The chief can tell you," was the sullen reply.

"The chief, sir, is simply so much baggage to be looked after just now, and I shall not allow

him to be disturbed in any way. Answer my question!"

There was a quiet dignity in the man before him that the outlaw could not withstand, so he answered:

"Yes, a messenger was sent."

"To bring the rest of the band?"

"Yes."

"How far had he to go?"

"I suppose he would have thirty miles to ride."

"What force can he bring?"

"About twenty men; perhaps more."

"He was well mounted?"

"Yes."

"Then he could ride there in two hours and a half?"

"About that."

"It would take perhaps four hours for the reinforcements to reach here—say seven hours before relief could come?"

"All of that."

"It is now but five hours to nightfall."

"Yes."

"And as soon as it is dark, if not before, the Indians certainly will overwhelm us here in this timber, as we now are."

"So it seems."

"Well, there is but one thing for us to do."

"Well, sir?" and the chief also listened attentively for the response.

"Retreat toward your reinforcements."

"Why, if we leave this timber we will all be murdered!" cried Van, in surprised alarm.

"If we stay here we certainly will be, for the trees allow the Indians to get near us, where they can use their arrows; but, out upon the prairie, your long-range rifles can keep them at bay."

"Get to work and make a litter for your chief, and then call the men together."

"I will not leave the timber to be massacred!"

Doggedly the man spoke, but he was completely taken aback when Frank Powell suddenly covered him with one of Captain Kit's revolvers, and said, sternly:

"You will do as I order, sir; for, if you are a band of cut-throats, and I a surgeon in the army, for the present I command here!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RETREAT FROM THE TIMBER.

FRANK POWELL was not a man to stand in his own light.

He saw that Van, the outlaw officer, was of the nature of the "dog in the manger," that is, he knew that, by right, he should command when his chief, Captain Kit, was not able to do so; but the emergency of the case alarmed him, and he wished to shirk the responsibility, yet was not willing that any one else should have the control.

A coward at heart, he still wanted to save his scalp, but did not care to owe it to the Doctor Scout that he did not lose it.

The men were busy watching the Indians, and he dared not call them to the scene to back him up; but he knew there were several who would instantly turn against the prisoner, unarmed as he was, for he had been their deadly foe.

All this Frank Powell seemed to read in the villainous countenance of the outlaw, and determined to govern himself accordingly.

While wiping off his instruments, he very quietly slipped one of the chief's revolvers that lay near into his breast-pocket, and thus surprised the outlaw rebel by suddenly covering him with the weapon, and uttering the words that closed the last chapter.

Even Captain Kit, suffering as he was, smiled at the cool way in which the Doctor Scout had turned the tables upon his sub-officer, and said faintly:

"Van, you seem to have forgotten that you have to deal with the Wizard Doctor. Look out that the red-skins don't find you ready for scalping when they come."

"I will not leave the timber," sullenly said the man.

"You will either leave the timber a live man, or you will remain there in your tracks a dead one, and I warn you that I am not one to parley with."

The words were uttered in almost serene tones; but there was a look in the eyes of the Doctor Scout that made the outlaw shudder, and he answered:

"Well, I obey now; but we will settle this another time, my fine Doctor."

"I warn you that you had better bury the matter, rather than become a subject yourself for others to bury," was the significant reply of Frank Powell, as he turned to glance up and down the river to see what the Sioux were about.

Van the outlaw was a dangerous man, if he could have his own way; but he loved life too well to risk it with chances against him, and he wisely said no more, but at the same time he vowed to himself that the matter was not ended between the Doctor Scout and himself.

So he very quietly walked away, while Frank Powell, with a hatchet taken from a saddle ly-

ing near, quickly cut down two long slender trees, and trimmed them into poles.

These he fastened a harness to, making it of a lariat, and thus formed a pair of shafts to hitch a horse in, the other ends of the poles being allowed to drag upon the ground, and thereby form an easy cot, or litter, for the wounded chief to lie on.

It was an Indian style of carrying off their wounded, and a very good one, for it was easier for a man suffering from wounds, than even a hand-stretcher would be.

The Indians had, in the mean time, approached the river-bank from three different points, for, as stated, the timber was in a bend of the stream just here.

A few shots with the long-range rifles had brought the red-skins to a halt, and they then waited in seeming patience, to see what their white foes would do, and to watch their every movement.

They knew well that when darkness came they could rush into the timber, and end the fight very quickly, protected as they would be by the trees.

Doctor Powell saw them send a small force off down the river, doubtless to see what had become of those who had gone in pursuit of Janette, and their not returning gave him hope that the young girl had escaped.

To prevent the red-skins from thinking they intended to decamp, the Doctor Scout set all but two of the men to work throwing up a fortification of logs and dirt.

This put the red-skins off their guard, as to his intentions to retreat; but the two men not engaged in the work were busy getting all in readiness to move off at a moment's notice.

When the horse had been hitched in the shafts of the litter, the ponies saddled, and all in readiness for the move, the Doctor Scout suddenly called the men from their work on the little fort.

Then, to the intense amazement of the red-skins, in broad daylight, before their eyes, the little band mounted their horses and rode out of the timber.

With their first move the Indians uttered wild yells of rage at being so cleverly deceived, and quickly pulling up their lariat-stakes, they sprung upon their ponies and dashed in pursuit.

But the fugitive band had gotten out of range from the grove of timber, out upon the open prairie, by the time the red-skins had reached the spot from which they had retreated.

Forming his little party into a hollow square, with one man, who had been slightly wounded in the leg, to lead the horse drawing the chief, alongside of the animal he bestrode, and the remainder to keep at an equal distance around it, the Doctor Scout kept on his way.

In their rage the Indians made a bold dash to ride down the whites; but the Doctor Scout gave his orders quietly; the men with long-range rifles fired first, then those with weapons of shorter range, and next using their revolvers, so that the charge was checked with the death of one outlaw and the wounding of another, while the Indians suffered greatly, as several warriors fell and some half-dozen ponies were knocked over.

Having repulsed this charge so easily, the outlaws saw the wisdom of the plan adopted by the Doctor Scout, and even Van, the lieutenant, admitted that he was right in leaving the timber, where they never could have held out after nightfall, when, under the cover of the darkness, the Indians could have crept near enough to spring upon them in a body, and in a hand-to-hand fight take the lives of all.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRANK POWELL'S PLEDGE.

THOUGH beaten off by the outlaws, the Indians by no means gave up the chase.

They sent back runners to bury on the two parties that had followed on the trail of Janette, left others to bury their dead, while the larger force persistently dogged the steps of the fugitives.

The Doctor Scout watched them with an eagle eye. Not a movement of theirs escaped him, and he at once surmised their object when he saw runners go back on the trail, and noticed that some had dropped off, when hidden by a rise of the prairie from his view.

His glass showed him that they no longer carried their dead, and this proved that they had left some of the braves to bury their fallen comrades.

At a quick walk Powell urged the outlaws on over the prairie, halting now and then to look after the comfort of the wounded chief, who several times had been lulled to sleep by the gentle motion of the stretcher upon which he was riding.

The men he kept riding in the shape of a square as before, and this order of march was not changed, though the Indians rode ahead, behind, or upon either side.

Several times the red-skins divided their force in four parties, and made a feint of attack from each quarter; but the long-range rifles were ordered discharged, and they beat a retreat in haste, for on two occasions the

Doctor Scout himself took a weapon and discharged it, and each time it tumbled a Sioux from his saddle.

Just before darkness settled down upon the prairie the Doctor ordered a sudden halt, while he sat upon his horse viewing the prairie in four different directions.

It did not take the outlaws long to see that their prisoner captain had made some important discovery, and they, too, looked about them at what had appeared in view.

First, their pursuing foes had taken up a position upon their left, and about three hundred yards distant, and halted when they did.

Then back upon their trail came quite a party of red-skins, whom Doctor Powell set down as the remainder of the band who had gone in chase of Janette.

They were coming slowly, as though their horses were tired, but at a gait that would soon bring them up with the retreating outlaws.

As the red-skins discovered their comrades they gave a yell of triumph; but that yell was quickly hushed when their eyes made a second discovery that had already attracted the gaze of the Doctor Scout.

What they saw was a party of whites coming rapidly toward the outlaws, and a glance was sufficient to show that they were a score in number, and the reinforcements which the Red Angel chief had sent for.

Determined to keep them from joining their comrades, the red-skins signaled to their braves back on the trail to hasten on, and started to ride ahead, so as to place themselves between the two parties.

But they had not gone far before they came to a halt, for a third party, coming from the right of the fugitive outlaws, fell under their observation.

A glance was sufficient to show them that the last party were soldiers, for the glimmering light from the west, where the sun had just gone down, fell upon dark-blue uniforms and glistened upon steel.

"Three-score Indians, when the second party comes up, about half that number of cut-throats, when they unite, and half a hundred cavalry, each party a hated foe of the other, will make things lively here on this prairie," said Doctor Powell with a light laugh, addressing the Red Angel chief.

"It will be a draw game, hard to solve, I guess; but what are my men yonder doing?" asked the chief.

"Coming toward us at full gallop," answered Powell.

"And the Indians?"

"Those on the trail are coming on rapidly to join their comrades over there on the left."

"And the soldiers?"

"They have halted to take in the situation."

"And what will you do, Doctor?"

"Go into a dry camp for the night, and, like Micawber, wait for something to turn up."

"It is the best that can be done."

"So I think now; if anything else suggests itself, I will let you know."

"Fortunately we have water for ourselves, but the horses will have to suffer for the night," and turning to the men, the Doctor Scout gave orders to go into camp for the night, and they had just obeyed him, when up dashed the score of outlaws coming to the relief, and at their head was Brick, the Black Bravo, as the Red Angel band called him.

CHAPTER XXV.

A TRIO OF HOSTILES.

SCARCELY a man in the Red Angel band who did not know Frank Powell, the Wizard Doctor, at least by sight. They had all heard of him, and how he was wont to go alone over the prairies, and often remain so long that he was given up as dead, and search-parties had been sent out to look him up or find his body.

At the fort, where he was chief surgeon, he had an assistant to look after the health, ailments and wounds of the soldiers; but his great skill had won him the name of being, in soldier parlance, "the boss Sawbones in the army," while he had also drifted into the fame of being a Wizard Doctor.

A thorough plainsman, and often heading a command when guides and scouts were at fault, he also became known as the Doctor and Surgeon Scout, while the Indians spoke of him as Mighty Medicine.

Under these several appellations, his fame had spread along the border, until he was dreaded by all white evil-doers and raiding red-skins.

When the re-enforcement of outlaws dashed up to their comrades, and threw themselves from their horses, their eyes fell upon the tall, splendid form of the Surgeon Scout, not in bonds amid their comrades, but free and issuing orders as though their leader.

Their amazement was the further increased at beholding their chief lying wounded in their midst, and, with the Indians upon one side of them, the soldiers on the other, and the general aspect of affairs, they were disturbed to know what had happened.

A few words of explanation were whispered around, and the outlaws who were new-comers,

fell into the routine of obeying their prisoner leader as readily as their comrades had done, and the result was that while Brick, the negro, went to the side of his master, the band quietly went into camp.

Frank Powell's first duty was to make Captain Kit comfortable, and he ordered a tent made for him out of blankets. Then the horses were staked in a circle around the camp, and outside of these a guard was placed about every hundred feet apart. The remainder of the band were assigned positions around their chief, with orders to have their weapons ready for instant use.

Then in darkness and silence they sat down to eat their supper of cold meat, while they wondered and waited to see what would come next.

Presently over the dark prairie fell a glimmer of golden light, and then above the horizon rose the moon.

As its silvery rays floated across the prairie, it glittered upon the arms of the soldiers as they were camped a quarter of a mile distant from the outlaws.

Upon the opposite side of the Red Angel bivouac were the Indians, lying motionless upon the prairie, while their ponies, staked out in a circle, were allowed to feed.

But lying in the grass, here and there, were Indian sentinels, watching with eager eyes every movement in the outlaw and soldier camps.

It was certainly a strange sight, to see those three bands, hostile to each other, thus silently watching and waiting for the night to pass, when the struggle for mastery must come.

When all was quiet for the night Frank Powell sought the little shelter of the chief.

"How are you feeling?" he asked, as kindly as though he addressed a dear friend.

"Easier than I expected, thank you."

"I can dress your wound again, now the moonlight is so bright, and I wish your servant to watch me well, so that he can serve you if need be."

"You certainly do not think that I intend allowing you to leave me?"

"Oh, no; but bullets and arrows will doubtless be on the wing to-morrow, and if I should be knocked under and you escape, it will be as well for this negro to be able to take care of you."

"True; but what do you think will be done to-morrow?"

"You must not talk so much; but while I dress your wound I will tell you what I think."

"Well?"

"The Indians and troops are your bitter foes?"

"Yes."

"The Indians and troops are the bitter foes of each other?"

"True."

"You, as an outlaw, and your men are at war with the world?"

"Certainly."

"Have you a retreat?"

"How do you mean?"

"Have you a stronghold?"

"No."

"No rendezvous?"

"A hundred rendezvous; but I live on the prairies or in the hills."

"These are not all of your band?"

"No."

"You know where to find the remainder?"

"Do you know, Brick, where the pack-train and guards are?" and the chief turned to the negro, who answered:

"Yes, massa; I knows."

"Then my advice to you is to act on the defensive wholly to-morrow, and retreat to your pack-train."

"Let one of your men slip off to-night and go to it, having them meet you at some spot nearer than they now are, and then take to the hills until you are able to again be in the saddle."

"This is good advice; but you?"

"Will remain with you, as I said I would, until you are out of danger."

"Enough. Brick, call Slick Sam here."

The negro obeyed, and that worthy soon appeared.

"Yer wanted me, chief?"

"Yes. I wish you to slip away from here and go with all speed to the pack-train."

"Yes, cap'n."

"Then have it come to Indian Head, and we will make for there in the morning."

"I'll git my horse an' be off ter wunst, cap'n."

"Hold on, my man; how far is the pack-train from here?" asked Doctor Powell.

"Bout twenty mile."

"You don't need a horse; but go on foot."

"I hain't heavy on the walk."

"Well, I warn you that there are fast horses in yonder troop, and fleet Indian-ponies in the band there."

"I has a fast crittur, too."

"All right; do as you please; but you had better go on foot, and crawl on the prairie until you get well out of sight of the Indians or soldiers."

"I is like a Comanche, Pard Doc. I is brave

as a billy-goat, on horseback, an' skeery as a owl, on foot."

"You have been warned, so go ahead your own way," quietly said Powell, and as Slick Sam walked off to get his horse, he continued:

"Chief, send for another man you can trust, and who is a good runner, and let him start on foot in the opposite direction from yonder fool."

A second man was called and given his orders, and he started a moment after Slick Sam did.

The latter mounted, and riding through the outer line of guards, urged his horse into a gallop.

All watched his course eagerly, and believed that he would not be noticed by either the Indians or the soldiers.

But suddenly, as if by magic, up sprung two forms from the grass, the one to the right, the other to the left of him, and the messenger was heard to utter a cry to his horse, which bounded forward at full speed.

Then the moonlight showed the horseman fall heavily to the ground, and next came a flash and the dark form on the left dropped.

With the fall of his rider the horse stopped, and the form on the right, from whence had come the flash and shot, bounded forward, sprung upon the animal, and riding toward the spot where the other had disappeared, halted there an instant.

Then he dashed away for the bivouac of the soldiers, which, with the Indian camp, was now a scene of excitement.

"Well, Doctor, what has happened?" asked the outlaw chief, as the Doctor Scout coolly resumed the dressing of the wound.

"Simply that your silly messenger was shot by an Indian sentinel with an arrow, and his slayer was then killed by a scout from the soldier camp, who was on duty off yonder on the prairie, and the red-skins and troops are excited and ready for a fight if either moves."

"Sam Slick was a fool, and deserves his fate for not following your advice; but the other messenger?"

"Has doubtless gotten through without trouble."

"And what is to be done?"

"Nothing, but remain quiet and wait."

"Now go to sleep and do not worry yourself," and with this cool reply the Doctor Scout wheeled on his heel and walked over toward the spot where the outlaws sat grouped together, one of them talking in a low earnest voice, and seemingly urging his comrades on to some act of devilry.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WIZARD DOCTOR HOLDS HIS OWN.

As the Doctor Scout approached the group of outlaws, and was recognized, the one who was speaking suddenly became silent, and a stillness fell upon all.

A few were standing, others lay upon their blankets at full length, several were seated upon the ground, and in their midst was Van, the outlaw.

And he it was that had been so earnestly talking when the Doctor Scout approached, and who now became silent.

Walking directly up to the man Doctor Powell said calmly:

"I overheard your threat against me, sir, and I have come to tell you now, that if you try to create trouble in this camp you shall have it to your heart's content."

There seemed no anger in the tones of the Doctor; but their very gentleness in utterance carried more weight with them.

Van, the outlaw officer, had been urging the men to aid him in placing the Doctor Scout in irons, and then forcing him to serve their chief.

He was fearful of losing his own prestige with the band, and saw that he had to act boldly.

The new-comers had been told how affairs stood, and a few of them were willing to back their comrade, Van, in whatever he might undertake.

But there were others who felt that, if the Doctor was their foe, he had certainly saved their chief's life, and had led them in safety thus far, prisoner though he also was.

"We can watch him to-morrow, an' if he don't pan out squar' while he are with us, we kin jist put a bullet inter him," said one of the men.

"No, we must not wait until to-morrow, for he will betray us before. Has he not already sent two of our men off to die, and thus cut down our number by two? I tell you, pards, the chief is all right, now that the bullet is extracted, and we know enough about wounds to look after him, and I say just seize the cursed Doctor and hold him as hostage to keep the soldiers at bay. If they come on, kill him, but if they don't come on, kill him anyhow, I say; and I will do it, too."

These were the words of the outlaw Van, which the Doctor Scout overheard as he walked toward the group, no one noticing his approach until he stood in their midst.

Taken wholly by surprise, Van was thrown

off his guard, and when Powell addressed him he had him covered with his revolver.

"You have the drop on me, so talk brave," said Van, doggedly.

"Yes, I have the drop on you, and I intend to keep it, for you are a snake that I must keep under my heel, I see. Men, does this fellow speak your sentiments against me?" and the Doctor Scout addressed the group of outlaws, all of whom were now on their feet, some of them with their hands on their weapons.

For an instant there was silence, and then a voice said:

"It's ag'in' ther run o' things fer a army officer ter boss a gang o' outlaws, an' 'specially when we has officers among us ter do it."

"I admit that it is against nature for an honest man to be the leader of a band of cut-throats; but I shot your chief, was taken prisoner, and he promised me my freedom when I got him out of danger. As that man," and he pointed to Van, "was going to allow the Indians to massacre all of us, I, for one, objected, and your chief asked me to assume command. I did so, and led a few of your number here in safety. Now yonder are honest comrades of mine, ready to attack you when daylight comes, and there are your red-skin foes, too, who want your scalps, and you are between two fires."

"But I have advised your chief as to what to do, and he has said that I am still to lead. The troops you can keep at bay by threatening to kill me; but the Indians you cannot stand off with any such threat, and I have no desire either to be shot by you or scalped by Indians, so I shall do my best to lead you to a place of safety as soon as I can. What do you say?"

The outlaws had listened to every word uttered by the Doctor Scout, and one said in response:

"I am sart'in, Pard Doc, that I speak for all, when I say we is willin' ter hev yer lead us, fer we hes confidence in yer, but yer must be content ter be tied up."

"No, sir, I'll be free, or take the consequences," was the defiant reply.

"What does yer say, pards?" called out the one who had before spoken.

"I say, put the irons on him, and then if the soldiers come on, kill him!" cried the outlaw Van.

"Yas, we kin do thet, Pard Van, and thet keeps ther blue-coats off; but how about ther Injins?"

"They won't tackle us," Van declared.

"Waal, I dunno 'bout thet, fer ef they was skeert they w'dn't hev stayed round heur when they see'd ther sojers, but lighted out fer thar camp in ther hills. But thar they stayed, an' thar they is, an' my idea is thet they hes other Injun frinds already sent fer, an' when ther sojers goes off, fer fear we is ter kill ther Wizard Doctor, then we'll git wiped out by ther red-skins, unless we sarcumvent 'em in some way, an' it are my opinyon thet ther Doc are ther pilgrim as kin save us from bein' scalped ef he are our foe, for he are takin' good keer o' his own scalp at ther same time. Does Old Joe talk horse-sense, pards?" and the man looked around upon his comrades whom he had harangued.

A chorus of voices answered in the affirmative; but then followed the words:

"It is all right if we puts the Doc in irons for safe-keepin'."

"Yas, yer must wear ther irons, Doc, tho' we won't do you no harm."

"I will not submit to it!" was the calm assurance.

"What are you going to do about it?" cried Van, now feeling that he held the winning hand.

"I will send a bullet through your heart, then fight it out right here!" was the ringing response, and the Doctor Scout faced the Red Angels, a revolver in each hand.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ASSASSIN.

THE Red Angel band were well aware that they had a most dangerous man to deal with in the person of Surgeon Frank Powell, of the United States Army.

They were also acquainted with the fact that few men took such big chances against death as he did.

But they were wholly taken aback to see him boldly confront them all, when the outlaw, Van, backed by others, said that they would put him in irons.

Now Captain Kit went well supplied, although he had no regular retreat, and among his equipments were those terrors of evil-doers, handcuffs, more generally called "irons."

The Doctor Scout had seen these implements among the useful articles of the Red Angel outfit, and he had no desire to have them put upon his wrists, nor did he intend that they should be if it was in his power to prevent the humiliation.

He knew that the Red Angels wished to see him in his grave, and once they got him wholly in their power, it was more than likely that their wish would be gratified.

The chief was his friend, as he felt his life depending upon the Doctor's valuable services and

skill; but, if the men felt their chief was out of danger, they would act to suit themselves, and Captain Kit would not weep over the surgeon's loss.

It was this knowledge that put Frank Powell at bay, there in the outlaw bivouac, for his mind was made up to bring the matter to a climax right there.

The outlaws had not expected such a fearless front from the Doctor Scout under the circumstances, and stood still, not knowing what to do.

As for Van, he was anxious to push matters, but he saw that he would not live to see the ending, as the Doctor had him safely covered.

"Well, men, you see what I am going to do about it," said Frank Powell, breaking the silence that was growing oppressive.

"Yas, yer looks dangerous, Doc, an' ef yer shoots, then yer may spect that ter be ther trumpet ter sound ther jubilee, fer ther sojers will rush in on one side, Injuns on t'other, and then ef ther cirkis hain't opened, I am a liar," remarked Old Joe.

"The chances are more in my favor if I do bring on the terrible conflict, than if I go with you ironed and helpless."

"Come, shall it be war right here, or shall I go a free man, bound only by my word not to attempt to escape until your captain is out of danger?"

"Speak quick, men, or your comrade there dies, for my finger itches to pull the trigger upon him."

The manly bearing of the Surgeon Scout won the admiration of the outlaws, evil as they were, and well knowing that they would not stand the least chance if a triple fight was precipitated, and believing that he was a man to keep his word, several said:

"Pards, let's let up on ther Doc."

"What does you say, Van?" asked Old Joe.

The answer came with alacrity, for Van was in danger greater than all:

"I will side with you, boys."

"Enough; but let me warn you that as your chief makes me the leader until you are out of this difficulty, I will allow no interference from any or all of you."

"But you won't attempt to escape, Pard Doc, or to commoonicate with the sojers?" asked Old Joe.

"No, I will consider myself as a soldier on parole."

"Thet are squar', pards."

"Yes," said a number of voices, and the Surgeon Scout turned to walk back to the chief, near whom he had spread his blanket, when a tall form glided toward him, a knife in his upraised hand.

The assassin made no sound as he went over the velvety grass of the prairie, and not a word of warning was given by the outlaws as they saw his intended work, for if their prisoner could die silently then and there, all right it was in their minds.

Breathlessly one person watched the gliding form, for he had hired him for the work by slipping a bag of gold into his hand, and in a whisper said:

"Dead Knife Jim, take this gold and use your blade on him, quick!"

The Surgeon Scout had walked a dozen paces, and the assassin was almost upon him.

Another moment and the career of Frank Powell would have ended then and there; but suddenly a shadow fell before the Doctor, lent by the moonlight upon the prairie.

He was on the alert, and beheld the dark shadow of a sneaking form, upraised arm, and knife in hand.

As though on a pivot he turned, a flash and report mingled, and Dead Knife Jim uttered a wild cry as his knife fell from his hand and stuck in the prairie sward.

Again did Frank Powell stand at bay, this time as before, with his hands thrust forward, and each holding a revolver, while he said, sternly:

"Cowards, to attempt to strike a man in the back! Out with your weapons, and meet me face to face!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DEAD KNIFE JIM'S FAREWELL GRIP.

DEAD KNIFE JIM, as he was known to his Red Angel pards, was considered the most reckless devil of the little outlaw community.

He was a tall, gawky man of forty, being over six feet in height, and all skin, bone and muscle.

Sometimes, on account of his long, gaunt figure, and willowy motions, he was dubbed "Snakey"; but few men dared call him that to his face.

He could run like a deer, and was known to possess great strength and endurance, while he was feared by all in an encounter.

Wearing a knife with a blade of great length, and which seemed to have served in a butcher-shop at some time in its ugly existence, he knew how to use it with great skill, and had the happy faculty of using one hand as well as the other.

On this account he wore two knives, one upon either side, and the mate to the butcher weapon was a bowie, as handsome in get-up as the other was rude in workmanship.

Upon his knives, rather than upon his two revolvers, did Dead Knife Jim more thoroughly rely.

In a combat he always used his knives, where it was possible to do so, and could throw them with wonderful precision to a great distance.

He enjoyed the reputation in the band of having killed two of his comrades in a duel, where they used a revolver and he his knife, and this had gained for him the name of Dead Knife Jim.

As for conscience he never had possessed any, his pards said, and he would kill a wounded man without the shadow of compunction, while his greed for gold was a passion.

Such was the man whom Van, the outlaw, had bribed to strike Doctor Powell in the back, and who had so promptly accepted the gold and the task.

The shot of the Doctor Scout brought the outlaws to their senses, and, in spite of watching the bold man who confronted them, they turned anxious glances quickly toward the soldier and Indian camps.

But the Doctor had begun hostilities, and he was ready to meet the consequences.

"My fine fellow, I give you your life, but leave my mark on you, for that arm will have to come off," said Frank Powell, calmly, and the wounded man cried savagely in response:

"If I loses my arm, I'll hev your life, Scout Doctor; you kin bet on that."

"Well, lose it you will, and I'll take the chances on your killing me."

"As you threaten me, I see I did wrong not to kill you, instead of breaking your arm."

"But come, the soldiers and the Indians are making no show of an advance, although the shot alarmed them, so let me look to your wound, my man."

Dead Knife Jim was standing, surrounded by his pards, and his left hand was grasping the shattered arm, while, in spite of his nerve, groans burst through his shut teeth.

The words and manner of the Doctor seemed to completely master him, and he made no savage response, as his comrades expected he would.

"You must let me look at your arm, for I pledge you that you will lose your life with that broken bone."

"How does yer know ther bone are broke?" asked the outlaw, with a twinge of pain.

"I shot to break the elbow and I did it," was the reply, and the Doctor Scout laid his hand gently upon the shoulder of Dead Knife Jim, while he continued:

"Come, I shot your chief, and have got him doing well, so let me repair the damage I have done you, as far as lies in my power."

"By Heaven, but I'll do it, for I believes you is squar', an' w'u'dn't cut even my arm off onless it hed ter be did."

"Thar's ther arm, Doc, or what yer hes left o' it, so jist see ef yer kin patch it up, but ef yer can't, jist nip it off clean an' give ther bone ter ther coyotes ter pick."

With a touch as tender as a woman's, Doctor Powell cut the sleeve of the hunting-shirt and examined the wound.

A very short time was sufficient to show him that he had been right in his conjecture, that the limb would have to be taken off.

"My man, I shall have to amputate your limb."

"Amputate, Doc?"

"Amputate."

"What are thet?"

"Cut it off."

"Why didn't yer say so in plain English like I talks, an' not sling out yer French?"

"Well I tell you so now."

"When are it to be did?"

"The sooner the better."

"I are willin', ef yer hain't able ter doctor it up."

"It would be impossible."

"Well, git out yer weepins an' set ter work."

"I can give you something to deaden the pain."

"I'll take a chaw o' tobaccy, an' thet are all."

"Here, take this cigar, an' put it between your teeth, and I have another for you, too," and the Doctor took from a handsome case a fine Havana.

"Is this Connecticut cabbage-leaf, Doc?"

"No, it is a real Havana."

"I is a little afeerd it are too rich for my blood, fer I hain't smoked a raal weed sin' I kilt a dandy ranchero, some year ago, an' he hed his pockets full of 'em; but they didn't agree with me."

"Well, your arm will give you no time to think of the cigar, I am afraid."

"Here, my man, bring me your canteen of water and help me," and Doctor Powell called to Old Joe, who quickly obeyed, while all the other outlaws gathered around to see the work done, and with very little show of sympathy for their comrade.

A lantern was looked up and lighted, and then, Dead Knife Jim having placed himself in a reclining position, as comfortable as was possible there on the prairie, Doctor Powell began his work, remarking quietly:

"Now, Dead Knife Jim, I'll amputate your arm in short order; but I would have saved myself trouble had I killed you instead of making you a subject for surgery."

"I'd rather lose ther arm nor my life, an' I begs yer ter be keerful thet yer don't take ther speerit out o' me when yer cuts ther arm off."

In spite of the vile character of the man under his knife, Frank Powell could not but feel real admiration for the great nerve and courage he exhibited under the most painful operation, and he said to him frankly, when he had thrown down his instruments and begun the work of dressing the stump:

"You are as brave as the bravest, my man, and I'll do all in my power to alleviate your pain and fetch you around all right."

"Thank yer, Doc; but is it over now?"

"Yes; I'll soon have you as easy as can be expected."

"Yer is a boss doctor, an' no mistake; hain't he, boys?"

A general assent and murmur of admiration followed from the crowd of outlaws, and it was very evident that they had highly enjoyed the nerve of their comrade and the skill of the surgeon.

"Will yer let me see thet arm, Doc?"

Frank Powell took up the severed hand and arm, which had been cut off just above the elbow, and held it before the vision of the outlaw.

"Give us yer grip, old pard, an' let me say far'well, fer we parts comp'ny now forever."

"Yer hes done a heap o' mean things, an' red deeds, I guesses; but yer hes never lost yer grip fer friend or foe ontill now," and with his left hand Dead Knife Jim firmly grasped his lifeless right, as the Surgeon Scout held it before him.

In spite of himself Frank Powell was affected by the strange act of the outlaw, and said earnestly:

"Now, my fine fellow, I'll bury your arm myself, for you are too brave a man to throw it on the prairie for the coyotes to feed upon."

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON THE ALERT.

HAVING kept his word, to bury the severed arm of the outlaw, Doctor Powell looked at the sleeping chief, whom the negro, Brick, had advised of what had happened, and then threw himself down to rest.

The life of peril by day and night which the Doctor Scout had led, caused him to sleep like Napoleon, "with one eye open," and there was not a movement near him that he did not at once become conscious of what was going on.

He had half an idea that some of the outlaws would attempt to assassinate him while he slept.

The soldier camp was seemingly on the alert, and the moonlight revealed forms moving here and there among the staked-out horses.

The outlaw camp was comparatively quiet, though some of the Red Angels, perhaps too anxious to sleep, with the gallows rising before their eyes, were strolling about like wandering spirits.

In the Indian camp all was as still as the grave, for no sound came from there, and not a pony or red-skin seemed to stir.

Now and then a low moan would come from the wounded chief for Dead Knife Jim, showing that they suffered in their sleep, and thrice did the attentive Surgeon Scout arise and look to their comfort.

Thus passed the night until just before dawn, and then even the horses seemed to sleep in the bivouac of outlaws.

But there was one whose eyes were wide open, and that one was Doctor Powell.

His knowledge of Indian character caused him to feel that if the Indians intended any cunning game, it would be started upon in the shadowy light between midnight and dawn.

Therefore, when all of the outlaws had dropped off into a nap, even to the guards he quietly left his blankets and crept to the outer line.

He there lay in the grass watching the Indian camp.

All was still there, but his glass showed him that their ponies were all collected in a mass.

"This means trouble," he muttered, and he scanned every spot of ground carefully between himself and the camp.

Many persons would have been satisfied with this examination; but Frank Powell was not, and he turned his glass upon the soldier bivouac.

All was as still as death there.

Then he swept the prairie to the right and saw nothing.

Upon the left the ground was more uneven, rising in small hills here and there.

Over this expanse Doctor Powell now looked, and the words that were slowly uttered showed that he had made some discovery, for he said:

"I thought they were up to some deviltry."

"Now to rouse these cut-throats without any disturbance."

Gliding to a guard, who was asleep in the grass, the Doctor said, as he awoke him:

"Come, my man, the Sioux are creeping toward us yonder, so be on the alert, but do not rise, or in any way show yourself."

In this way the Doctor Scout aroused the rest of the camp, and in ten minutes a line of outlaws had been formed to meet the attack.

They all lay at full length in the grass, and had their rifles ready, as they pointed toward the coming Indians.

Lying beside them, Frank Powell was watching the red-skins through his glass, which revealed what the eye could not see unaided.

"Those coming rascals have come round on the flank, and not from toward their camp, where they knew we would be looking for them," said the Doctor to Old Joe, who lay near him.

"Yas, Doc, they is cunnin' varmints, an' it are lucky for this congygation thet you was a-lookin' out, or we'd hev been skulpt sart'in."

"But they has the'r ponies standin' in a bunch over thar at thet camp."

"Yes, and by each pony stands a warrior, for their little game is to have those braves mount and charge the soldier camp, just as those on foot rush in on us."

"This would keep the soldiers busy, while those creeping yonder would make short work here."

"It is a well-laid plan, for, after massacring us, the same party could mount our horses and aid in the attack on the soldiers."

"Waal, waal, you is a Wizard Doctor fer seein' clean through ther way o' Injuns."

"But whar is they now, Doc?" and all within hearing waited anxiously for the reply.

"They are in the hollow beyond that hill, and they will organize there for the line in which they intend to attack."

"As they will crawl almost upon us, it will be half an hour before they get in good range, which will be that rise you see two hundred yards away."

"As they creep over that, I will give the order to fire; but I do not wish the soldiers to be taken by surprise, for it is my belief that the Indians have been re-enforced during the night, and they may now be sending a crawling party against the troops."

"That is so, an' thar does seem to be more of 'em than thar were."

"Well, Old Joe, you can make a hundred dollars if you are willing to take the chances."

"I takes big chances, Doc, ter git gold," was the reply of the old outlaw.

"Are you afraid to go to the soldier camp?"

"What fer?"

"To warn them so that they can be on their guard."

"Why, they'd hang me, Doc."

"No, I will write you a line that will protect you."

"Don't be no fool, Joe," said an outlaw.

"I hain't."

"You will not go, then?"

"Waal—"

"They'll take you in pawn, Joe, fer him," whispered a voice near.

"So I'm thinking."

"I will pay you two hundred."

"Ther leetle soul-box I carries, Doc, are worth more than gold."

"I'd like ter obleege yer, but I hain't willin' ter risk it."

"Will any man go with a paper from me to protect him?" asked the Doctor.

No voice answered.

"I will give five hundred dollars to the man who does," continued the Doctor.

But no man volunteered, and the Doctor Scout uttered something very like an oath, while he again turned his gaze upon the Indians, until a remark near him caused him to look around.

The remark was addressed by one outlaw to another, who was just leaving his post.

"Why, Dead Knife Jim, what on 'arth is yer doin' heur?"

"Yer doesn't think I is a-goin' ter lie idle when thar is work ter be did?" came the answer.

"But yer hain't able."

"So I finds, and I is goin' back ter my blankets for a while; but call me when ther shootin' begins."

"Come, my man, you must not remain here, but go back to your blanket and keep quiet," said the Doctor Scout, amazed at seeing the man.

"I are off, Doc," was the reply, and Dead Knife Jim wormed himself back out of the line, and all eyes again turned upon the line of crawling Indians, who little dreamed that they were watched by the foes whom they hoped to surprise, and who were making such good use of the few clouds that overcast the moon, and the shadowy light that was the precursor of dawn.

CHAPTER XXX.

STRANGE VISITORS TO THE SOLDIERS' BIVOUAC.

THE clouds that had gathered toward the break of day certainly gave advantage to the cunning Indians, for they cast a shadow over the prairie, and obscuring the moonlight, made even the horses at the different camps look like specters.

In the soldier-camp all was stillness, for the guards, worn out with their long watch, were napping upon their posts, and the officers and men were lying grouped together on their blankets

and cloaks, too sound asleep even to dream of what the morrow might bring forth.

But there was one on watch who did not allow himself to be overcome with sleep.

He was not on duty, but knowing full well the negligence of soldier guards, he had thrown himself down upon the prairie, and there lay, wide awake and allowing his eyes to wander around the camp.

In the early part of the night he had been the one who, scouting around, had seen the outlaw messenger attempt to dash away, and when he fell by the arrow of an Indian, had quickly dropped the warrior with a shot from his rifle, and returned to camp with a trophy in the shape of a Sioux scalp.

This man, so thoroughly on the alert, was the scout and guide of the troopers, and he was well worthy of the name he had won and which was that of "Night Hawk."

He was also called "Texas Night Hawk" as he hailed from the Lone Star State, where he had won fame as a daring ranger and scout; but upon the pay-rolls of the fort he was down as George E. Powell, and he was a brother of the Doctor Scout.

He had come to the fort to read medicine under the able tuition of his distinguished brother; but, a man who loved danger, and was really a "son of the plains," he had so often rendered such valuable services as a volunteer soldier, that he became a regular, through a commission sent him for gallantry.

Resigning the rank he entered upon the duties of a scout, and shared with the surgeon, his brother, the fame of being one of the best prairiemen on the border.

As Night Hawk, for by such name will he be known in these pages, gazed out over the prairie, performing the same duty in the soldier camp that his brother was in the outlaw bivouac, his eyes fell upon a dark object moving through the grass.

At first he believed it to be a wolf; but he soon saw that it was too large for such an animal.

"An Injun, as I live," he said, quietly.

"I'll get his scalp, I think," he continued, as the form came nearer the camp.

Suddenly the form halted, and seemed to be surveying the camp.

Then it came on once more, and so directly toward the encampment that Night Hawk muttered:

"Well, that is the greatest fool Injun* I ever saw."

"He must think we are dead, drunk or asleep, and, by Jove, he is nearly right about the latter for I do not think a man in camp is awake excepting myself."

"What! he must be coming directly into camp, for not even a red-skin would approach that near simply to reconnoiter."

Night Hawk now kept his eyes fixed upon the coming form, and drawing a revolver waited until the strange invader of a soldier camp came near enough to speak to, when he said in a low tone:

"Well, pard, who are you?"

"I are one who are glad ter find some cuss awake in this heur camp, fer durned ef I didn't believe you was all massacred," was the cool reply.

"Well, who are you?" and Night Hawk still kept his revolver covering the man, who remained in the same recumbent position in which he had approached.

"If it'll tickle yer ter know me, I'll inter-dooce myself as Dead Knife Dick, an' I comes from the outlaw camp."

"Ah! to betray your comrades?"

"Nary betray, pard; you shoots at conclousins too durned rapid, an' misses ther target."

"I are a outer an' out outlaw, hev'n' nussed milk out a bottle when I were a baby that were stole from a neighbor's dairy, an' I guesses when I turns up my toes I'll be planted in some earth which will be stolen ter kiver me."

"But I wants ter tell yer, thet ther Wizard Doctor, who are—"

"Hal! my brother then is in your camp, and the sergeant who said he recognized him was right."

"Are ther Wizard Pill-Giver your brother?"

"Yes."

"He are a tassel-top, a clover-blossom, a howlin' white man clean through, and—"

"I know his virtues, so what have you to say about him?"

"He sent me ter say thet ther Injuns was playin' a sly leetle game, fer they hed the'r ponies ready in the'r camp, an' braves standin' by 'em, ready ter charge inter you, while a large party of 'em were crawlin' toward our outlaw lay-out ter massacre us, an' mayhap as many more were a-creepin' on you heur, an' I'm durned ef I don't believe thar be, as ther reds hes hed a reinforcement durin' ther night thet we didn't tumble to."

"And my brother, Doctor Powell, sent you here with this warning?"

*The contraction of the word Indian to Injun is used by many educated persons upon the plains, the same as nigger is often made use of in the place of negro, in some cases even by educated people.—THE AUTHOR.

"Fact."

"What is he doing in the outlaw camp?"

"He are a priz'ner."

"Ah?"

"Yes, we capter'd him, arter he hed bored a hole in ther chief, an' laid out a couple o' ther boys for wolf-meat, an' we holds him thar until ther cap'n an' I gits well."

"You?"

"Yas."

"Did he wound you?"

"Waal, I are short a arm, that are all; but he are a per.ect gent'man, are ther Wizard Doc, fer he broke my arm, and then cut it off in beautiful style."

"By Heaven, you are right; but do you mean to say that you have crept here with your arm just amputated?"

"I hev, fer none o' ther boys w'd come, thet ther Doc offered 'em five hundred dollars, so I jist lighted out as yer see, an' hev'n' did my duty, I'll git back ter my camp, as I hain't over strong, an' it are my gospil opinyun thet thar is goin' ter be a sneakin' good time fer coyotes 'round this pararer afore very long."

"You are right; but come with me to the captain, and—"

"No, pard, I is goin' right back, an' lose no time about it."

"I hes done my duty, an' I'll be off."

"Well, I am more than thankful to you, and it is just like my noble brother to send you to warn us."

"Tell him we are on the alert, and that it shall not be forgotten that he is in the hands of a gang of cut-throats."

"Go slow a'out forcin' my pards, young feller, for they mou't do ther Doc some harm ef yer drives 'em, an' ef you lets him look arter hisse'f he kin do it, you bet."

"Now I are off," and the one-armed outlaw, suffering unto'd agony, went creeping quietly back toward his camp.

For half a minute Night Hawk watched him, and then he went quickly toward the group of officers lying in the center of the camp.

As he passed through the circling line of horses, he suddenly came upon a person whose presence filled him with amazement, for he started back, his hand upon his revolver, while the one he confronted said quickly:

"Hold, sir! Would you kill a woman?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

A WOMAN'S WARNING.

THE person who so suddenly confronted Night Hawk Powell, the fort scout, when he went up to arouse the officers to a knowledge of their danger, as told him by that strange man, Dead Knife Jim, was, as her words to him implied, a woman.

He was amazed at finding there one whom he little dreamed he would see upon that wild prairie.

A woman there!

From whence had she come?

How had she gained entrance to the camp, even through the line of napping guards?

Who was she?

What was she doing there?

All these queries flashed like lightning through the mind of the scout.

It was a night of surprises, but that certainly was the greatest.

Struck with her words, and the question asked him in a tone of sarcasm, as to whether he would kill a woman, he answered quickly, and with some sternness:

"No, I do not war upon women, even though I find one here on seemingly hostile intent, for you are armed, I see."

"Yes, I am armed, and it is well that I am; but I am here on no hostile errand, but one of warning, if this is a United States soldiers' camp, as I believe."

"It is the camp of Captain Burt, and I was just going to arouse him, as there is danger threatening."

"There is indeed danger threatening, for up yonder divide of the prairie are creeping half a hundred Sioux warriors to attack your camp."

"Hal! that one-armed outlaw was right then; but come, miss, and see Captain Burt," and Night Hawk led the strange visitor to the group of officers, five in number, who lay sleeping soundly upon their blankets.

With a touch he aroused them, and their amazement at beholding a female quietly confronting them was as great as had been the scout's.

"Captain Burt, there is mischief brewing, and this lady has come into camp to warn you of it."

"After you hear her story, sir, I have something to communicate of importance," said Night Hawk.

The captain raised his hat politely, as did the other officers, while he remarked with gallantry:

"It is a surprise and a pleasure to see a lady in our humble prairie camp, and you are most heartily welcome."

"Thank you, sir; but this is no time for politeness, as the Sioux encamped over yonder were reinforced during the night by two other

hands, each their equal in number, and they are now creeping upon your camp with one party, upon the Red Angels with another, while they have a third force ready to mount and charge your camp the instant the two bands of braves on foot reach the point where they intend to make a simultaneous rush upon you and the outlaws."

The words were rapidly spoken, but distinct and explicit, and they fell upon the ears of the officers like a knell, and Captain Burt said hastily:

"Gentlemen, go quickly, and see that every man is awake and ready at his post."

The several officers departed, and again turning to his feminine visitor, Captain Burt continued:

"My words to my officers, miss, prove how I appreciate your warning; but pardon me if I ask how it is that I find you here upon the prairie, gliding into my camp like a friendly specter, and bringing tidings of such importance?"

"I am an unfortunate girl, sir, who within a few hours I may say, have lost all I loved in the world, for our train was attacked by the Red Angel outlaws, my father and I fled, but he died upon the prairies, and a noble man, the surgeon at your fort, alone saved me from a fate worse than death."

"To save me, he sprang from his horse to alone meet the outlaws, and I saw him dragged away by them, but whether dead or living, I know not."

"I fled to one he directed me to, a Major Monkton, and he also saved me, but from the Sioux who were pursuing me."

"The major was wounded and returned to his ranch, while I, anxious to know the fate of the noble surgeon, came on accompanied by the black cowboys from the ranch."

"We tracked them within a few miles of here, and then discovered your camp, the outlaws and the red-skins, and a negro scout discovered the cunning game of the Indians, and I determined to warn you, so came here, passing through your lines unseen by any one until I was met by that gentleman."

"My dear young lady, you have indeed been a sufferer; but you shall remain under my care until we reach the fort, and there you will find many warm friends."

"No, sir; I have a home already, and an adopted father in Major Monkton; but I could not let you be attacked unwarned, so came to tell you what my black scouts had discovered."

"I will return to them now, for they await me off yonder a little way, in a divide of the prairie."

"But you must not go alone."

"I will escort the lady, captain, as soon as I tell you that my brother, the Doctor, is a prisoner to the Red Angels, and unharmed; but I think they will hold him for a hostage against us."

"Frank Powell in the hands of those fiends, whom he has so persistently dogged?"

"This is sad news indeed," said Captain Burt, anxiously.

"Frank will take care of himself, sir, never fear, and as long as he is alive and unwounded I feel no anxiety about him."

"But, just before this lady arrived, an outlaw visited the camp, and said Frank had bribed him for five hundred dollars to come and give you the warning of the Indians' intended attack."

"I was on my way to tell you, sir, when I met our fair visitor here."

"And the outlaw, Powell?"

"I had no right, under existing circumstances, to detain him, so allowed him to go."

"It was right, perhaps, but I wish you had held him— Ah! I see that you are anxious to be off, miss, and I will not detain you, while I assure you that your brave act to-night will be remembered, and the major commandant I know will call at Monkton Ranch to see you."

"I am in a hurry, sir, for I feel that a few more moments will bring on the attack from the Indians, and I wish to be back with my men."

"And a brave lot of protectors you have, miss, in those brave black cowboys; but now I will say *au revoir*, for we shall meet again."

"You will escort the lady, Powell, to her cowboys?"

"Yes, Captain Burt, with pleasure," answered the scout, and he led Janette from the camp out upon the dark prairie and in the opposite direction from that in which the danger lay.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE TRIANGULAR COMBAT.

ALL that had taken place from the first inkling that the Doctor Scout had of the cunning game the Sioux were secretly playing, up to the departure of Janette from the soldiers' camp, had not taken an hour in transpiring, though it has taken so much space to make known.

As the young girl, escorted by Night Hawk, the scout, departed from the camp, dawn was breaking, and a gray light was stealing over the prairie.

The soldiers were now lying flat on the ground in line of battle, excepting a few, who

held the horses in a circle, ready for their riders to mount, and Captain Burt and his officers were at their posts, several of them discussing in low tones the strange visitor of a few moments before.

Over toward the Sioux camp all was quiet, and only a dark mass was discernible, where the ponies were grouped with their riders by their sides.

The Red Angel camp was also still, and thus the moments were gliding away in awful suspense, none knowing what the light of day would usher in.

Suddenly a long line of flame shot up from the prairie over at the Red Angel encampment, temporarily revealing the outlaws and their horses, the former having begun the battle, ending the pent-up suspense by striking the first blow.

Almost simultaneously with the roar of the Red Angels' rifles came a series of yells from the Sioux, from over on the ridge near by within easy range of the outlaw bivouac.

Those yells told of death in their midst, that the rifles had struck home, and there were also howls of rage and hatred.

Where they had expected to strike in the back, as it were, to spring upon a sleeping foe, just as they rose for the fatal rush, they had met that shower of lead which had laid half a dozen in their tracks dead, and wounded as many more, for the Red Angels were crack shots, men whose lives had too often depended upon their aim to throw away powder and ball.

With the volley from the outlaws came yells far down the prairie, and a rush of red-skins was made upon the military camp.

But Captain Burt's voice was heard giving his orders to fire, and as one gun two-score of carbines flashed, and again did Sioux braves bite the dust.

Off at the camp of the Indians, where the ponies were massed together, the warriors mounted in hot haste, and with fiendish yells, charged down upon the outlaw camp, while the attacking party on foot, rallying after their first repulse, also came on, their war-cries echoed by the yells of the mounted braves, and re-echoed from those who were rushing down upon the soldiers.

"Stand firm, all, and wait until I give the order to fire," cried the Doctor Scout, his trumpet voice heard above the din.

He had quickly formed the Red Angels in a circle, around their horses and their wounded chief, and relying fully upon him, they stood their ground, firm as a rock, to meet the overwhelming charge.

"The dismounted braves first; aim true—fire!"

With the last words the Red Angels touched their triggers, and another deadly fusillade went forth that sent the warriors to their faces to escape death.

"Well done, men, for there are a number went down then who will not rise again."

"Now look out for their arrows— Ha! they retaliate well."

"Bring a dozen of those horses here, and kill them for a breastwork."

With an alacrity that was born of having done much work in deadly peril, the outlaws led out a dozen of their worst horses, and ranging them in a circle, dropped them dead where they stood by a bullet in the brain of each.

Thus protected, for they threw themselves down behind the still quivering breastwork of horse-flesh, the Red Angels awaited another command from their prisoner commander.

He had himself sprung forward and looked to the safety of Captain Kit, and urged Dead Knife Jim to seek cover behind the horses.

But that worthy said coolly:

"Guess I hain't so bad, Doc, but that I kin help a bit," and he took his place in the front line with the others, resting his rifle across the body of a slain horse.

Frank Powell now glanced over at the soldier camp, to see that Captain Burt had formed his men into a square, the horses in the center, and was keeping at bay the party attacking him.

But, should the Sioux sweep over the outlaws, the Doctor Scout knew well that the two forces, mounted and foot warriors, approaching them then, would all rush down upon the soldiers and most likely annihilate them.

It was a most critical moment, and the Surgeon Scout, as well as every outlaw, realized it; but they depended upon him with the same trust which they had shown their chief in dangers of the past.

"Now let the pony braves have it, men—fire!"

The order seemed to issue from Frank Powell's lips in the very nick of time, and again did the Red Angels show their nerve and true marksmanship, for the volley went where it was aimed, right into the midst of human and brute flesh, for down went warriors and ponies in one huddled mass together.

"Well done, men; now let them have it as rapidly as you can fire—never mind the foot-warriors just now."

Rapidly the Red Angels poured in their fire

now, and with yells of dismay the mounted warriors broke and fled to safety, deserting their wounded and dead, and those on foot, who were now up and rushing upon the little band.

"Give those fellows your revolvers, now!" cried the Surgeon Scout, his blood warming up to the work, though outwardly calm as a statue.

In response, the rattle of the revolvers began, and, unable to face the scathing leaden hail driving in their faces like a chill norther of the prairies, the foot-band also beat a retreat, but dragged back with them to the shelter of the ridge their dead and wounded comrades.

The daylight had now come, the east was growing rosy, as though reflecting back the red flashes of firearms, and, as the Sioux were firing with the few rifles they had, and their bows, and the soldiers were "standing off" the force attacking them, Frank Powell, as he glanced coolly over the prairie, saw that a triangular battle was being fought, which, if the red-skins managed to break the line of troopers, would end in a massacre of the pale-faces, soldiers and outlaws alike.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TO THE RESCUE.

THAT Captain Burt and his men realized the full gravity of their situation, was very evident.

They had left the ranch on a hunt for the Surgeon Scout, who had given out that he would be absent but a day.

Rumors coming in the next morning that a band of Indians were raiding round, and the Doctor not having returned, Major Benteen, the fort commandant, had ordered Captain Burt and two-score troopers on a search for him.

They had thus come upon the Indians, the Doctor, and the Red Angels all at once.

As with the red-skins, the troops had a standing war with the Red Angels, and when the shadows of night fell, congratulated themselves that they would have a fair opportunity of severely punishing Indians and outlaws alike.

They saw, from the position of affairs, that the red skins were pursuing the outlaws, and in spite of their, the soldiers', appearance, did not intend that they should escape them.

It looked like defiance on the part of the red-skins, and Night Hawk, the scout, reported to Captain Burt that their boldness was occasioned by having reinforcements near.

A sergeant of the company had said that he recognized the Surgeon Scout among the outlaws, and this caused the captain to make no effort to attack, but wait until morning, for he feared that the Red Angels might put their prisoner to death.

Watching each other, as the reader knows, the Indians, outlaws, and soldiers went into a dry camp to await the morrow and what it might bring forth.

What that morrow ushered in the reader has seen, as also the strange scenes that had transpired during the night.

When the general attack began, Captain Burt and his men met it promptly and bravely; but he soon saw that Night Hawk had been right in his surmise that the Indians had other comrades near, for, after the first charge and repulse, he saw that they had three times the force of the evening before, and outnumbered him six to one.

Anxiously he watched the double attack upon the Red Angels, and the cool manner in which the outlaws met and drove back their foes, mounted and on foot, won his admiration.

"By Heaven, Ames! there stands Surgeon Powell in the midst of the outlaws," cried Captain Burt, looking through his glass.

The young officer addressed leveled his own glass, and after gazing an instant upon the outlaws, answered:

"Yes, sir, I recognize the Doctor's tall form, and so far from being a bound prisoner, he seems to be directing the outlaws as a leader."

"Yes, they have been forced to release him to aid in the defense, well knowing from experience the worth of his strong arm and deadly aim."

"I only wish he was here with us, and Night Hawk, too, for I am anxious about the scout and that strange girl."

"Night Hawk will take care of her, and himself, too, Captain Burt; but here they come, sir, at us again," and all now devoted themselves to the work of meeting another charge of the red-skins, who had retreated to the divide, where their ponies were, and now came mounted to the attack.

The soldiers set their teeth, and fired in platoons, as their captain ordered, and once more sent the red-skins reeling out of range, wild with rage and yelling like demons.

All drew a long breath at the result, but their attention was at once called to the outlaws, who were again to face the same ordeal.

The soldiers saw that the Red Angels were few in number, that some of them lay back in the center of the little circle, wounded or dead, and that the red-skins were driving down upon

them both on foot and horseback in four separate bands.

Two of these bands were on foot and two mounted, and the attack was from four different quarters.

There were double the number of Indians against the outlaws who were opposing the soldiers, and with half as many foes to face them.

"By the gods of war! but I would be glad to see the red-skins wipe those fellows out, but for Surgeon Powell's presence in their midst," cried Captain Burt.

"Yes, sir; and they meet the attack so bravely I feel like helping them almost," answered Lieutenant Ames.

"You have struck the right key-note, Ames, for, be they what they may, on Powell's account I will become their ally in this fight, and help beat those red devils back," and calling to his bugler, Captain Burt was about to order him to sound the march when Lieutenant Ames called out in clarion tones:

"Attention! stand ready, for here they come again!"

The attention of all was at once taken from the outlaws, and once more the soldiers had to face the red-skins' charge.

It was more desperate than before, and the soldiers wavered a little under the rain of arrows, but the Sioux again broke and ran to the shelter of the divide.

Here and there a soldier was stretched out dead, a horse or two had fallen, and half a dozen men reported themselves wounded, so that affairs looked blue.

"Now is the time we need Powell," said the captain, sadly, as he turned to do what he could for the wounded.

"The outlaws seem to have suffered, too, sir, but they beat off the red-skins at every quarter," remarked Lieutenant Ames, who had again turned his glass upon the Red Angels' camp.

"Yes, and they fought with fewer men a much larger force than we did, Ames; but then, those reckless devils are fond of bloodshed and fight with a halter about their necks."

"And we with a scalping-knife suspended over our heads; but I believe, sir, the red-skins are going to consolidate against us."

"By Jove! but you are right, for see, they are leaving the outlaws and coming to join their comrades."

"It looks dismal for us, Ames, and I would to Heaven Night Hawk was here, for he is worth a score of soldiers in an Indian fight."

The soldiers also saw that the red-skins, that had attacked the outlaws, were moving down to join their comrades, all of them being now mounted, and leaving but a small force to follow with the dead and wounded, whom they had strapped upon the backs of ponies.

The soldiers having wavered under the charges of the Indians before, what would they not do when they had to face a much larger force, was the thought in the minds of Captain Burt and his officers, and it was no wonder that one and all were anxious as to the result, for Indian mercy was not a virtue known to those who met them in battle.

Watching closely the troopers saw the two forces unite and then assemble for a council of war.

Glancing over toward the outlaw camp, they beheld the Red Angels apparently taking things with a great deal of indifference as to what might occur.

"We are in for it, Ames, that is certain, so let the men do as the outlaws have done."

"How do you mean, Captain Burt?"

"Kill a number of horses, range them in a circle, the saddles on top, and throw up sod and dirt with their knives to make as good a breastwork as possible."

"We can then make a good fight, sir."

"Yes, we can fight it out to the bitter end, and die in our tracks, Ames," was the stern response of Captain Burt.

The order of the captain was quickly obeyed, the dead and wounded horses being made use of first, and then others were slain when needed to make up the circle.

Thus, with the horses, the saddles, blankets and traps, and sod and dirt hastily thrown up, the breastwork was a fair protection against the Indian arrows, and even more than an Indian pony would care to go over.

The red-skins coolly watched the work of the soldiers, as though they felt assured of their prey, and still kept on holding their council of war.

"The outlaws are working like beavers, too," said Lieutenant Ames, and upon looking toward them it could be seen that the Red Angels had not only not been idle, but had completed a breastwork far superior to the one the soldiers had built.

"That looks like Powell's work, Ames; but what in the mischief is the matter with the Indians?"

"They are coming again, sir!"

"Stand ready all! Let no man waver, or we are all lost."

"Be firm, aim true, and we will yet beat those red devils off!" shouted Captain Burt, and a cheer answered his words, which ended in

one long yell and the words, shouted in a chorus of voices:

"The Night Hawk! the Night Hawk!"

"Bravo! he is coming!"

All eyes were now turned in a direction opposite to the Indians, who were momentarily forgotten, and they saw a dozen horses dashing swiftly toward them, and upon each animal was a rider.

At their head were two persons, one none other than George Powell, the Night Hawk Scout, and the one by his side was a young girl—Janette.

Behind these, riding two by two, were the black cowboys from Prairie Rest Ranch.

"Bravo! yonder small band are a host in themselves for us, men," cried Captain Burt, cheerily, and three ringing cheers were given for the daring ones who were coming to their aid, even at the risk of self-sacrifice.

The excitement among the Indians, which had been mistaken for another charge, was now understood, for they had first discovered the relief party dashing over a rise in the prairie toward the besieged soldiers.

Chagrined that the relief party would reach the little fort before them, the Indians vented their fury in yells, and, continuing their charge, although not organized, rode swiftly down upon their foes.

"Be ready to receive them!" shouted Night Hawk, and his words brought the soldiers to a sense of their danger.

Then, when within a hundred yards of the soldiers, Night Hawk wheeled his horse to the rightabout, Janette and the cowboys at once did the same, and a line was quickly formed.

"Good God! can the scout mean to try and check them?" cried an officer.

But, as the words left his lips, the rifles of the daring band cracked, and ere the smoke drifted away the effect was seen upon the Indians, who were staggered by the galling fire, while Night Hawk and his brave followers dashed on to the fort.

"Over!" cried the scout, to the negroes, and then to the soldiers:

"Stand away all!"

Straight at the barricade they went, and amid a breathless silence among the soldiers, the horses of Night Hawk and Janette shot into the air and came safely down within the circle, while amid the wild hurrahs that greeted them, the black cowboys followed two by two.

The red-skins answered the cheers of the soldiers with fiendish yells, and drawing nearer to the little fort, showed by their actions that they intended to attack in a very short while, for they seemed driven to madness by the losses they had sustained.

"The reds think you are the easier party to run down, so united their forces on you first, captain, and will then take in the outlaws, if successful," said George Powell, the scout, as he sprang from his horse and aided Janette to dismount.

"And what chances of success have they, Powell?" asked Captain Burt, as he stepped forward to greet Janette.

"Life is uncertain, captain; but whatever the chances, this brave girl insisted upon coming with her brave followers to share them with you, and you see that they are here."

"And most welcome, too, for you add great strength to our force, sweet lady, though you increase your own peril."

"It certainly was most self-sacrificing on your part, and I will appoint you chief of our hospital and give you a place here," and the captain led Janette to the little inner circle, where the wounded had been taken.

"See, Captain Burt, the Indians are preparing for a grand rush," cried an officer.

"Yes, and the outlaws are retreating," cried Lieutenant Ames, as horsemen were seen riding out of the barricade thrown up by the Angels.

"By Heaven! they are flying in safety, while we are left here to be massacred," said Captain Burt, bitterly.

"You are mistaken, Captain Burt; the Red Angels are coming to our aid," said Night Hawk.

"It is so, by the Lord Harry, and the Wizard Doctor leads them!" shouted Lieutenant Ames, as the tall form of Frank Powell was seen at the head of the Red Angel horsemen.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN ASSASSIN FOILED.

THE words of Lieutenant Ames, at the close of the last chapter, stated the situation exactly in regard to the Red Angels having left their little barricade, with Doctor Powell at their head as leader.

To explain the situation to my kind reader, I shall have to take him again into the outlaw camp, and at the time when the Sioux made their combined charge on foot and mounted, and the most desperate one, upon the Red Angels.

They had failed in effecting a surprise upon the outlaws, had been beaten back in their attack, but felt that by a decided rush from four different points, with warriors mounted and dismounted, their very weight of numbers would push them over into the barricade, and,

once it came to a hand-to-hand conflict, they knew the fight would quickly end, for no brave could retreat then, and, by hurling themselves upon their enemies, they could bear them to the ground.

Doctor Powell observed their plan of attack, and at once arranged to meet it.

He divided his men into two bands, in spite of the four attacking parties, and left each defending force two of the enemies' advancing columns to keep back.

"Fire on the mounted warriors first and stampede them, and then turn upon those on foot with your revolvers," he ordered.

The men saw the wisdom of his plan and every gun and weapon was brought into requisition.

Several of the outlaws had been seriously wounded, and one had been slain, but the former were willing to do what they could in the defense, encouraged as they were by seeing Dead Knife Jim ready for action, and Captain Kit, even, with ammunition by his side to load the weapons as rapidly as he could.

The reader has seen, as the soldiers saw, that the red-skins retreated under the withering fire of the Red Angels; but only one person saw the coward act of Van the outlaw.

The more the Wizard Doctor arose in the admiration of the outlaws the more Van hated him, and in the heat of action, when a Comanche had been killed and several more wounded, while a few shots were fired by the red-skins and the crack of rifles and revolvers in the fort made a merry rattle, and the smoke hung like a pall over the brave little band, renegades from justice though they were, he, the cross-grained, envious Red Angel lieutenant, determined to end the days of the very man to whom he and the others owed their lives.

Watching his chance, he suddenly turned his revolver muzzle toward the Doctor Scout, who was crouching near him, little dreaming of treachery so great even from Van, the outlaw, and his finger was upon the trigger to send the bullet on its unerring course into the brain of his hated foe.

But, anxious to make no mistake, he lingered just an instant too long in taking aim, and as the report of the weapon rung out, the muzzle had been struck up, and the bullet whizzed above the Doctor's head.

"I've a mind ter knife yer fer that, Van, so help me God, ef yer tries ter show yer that ther hand ther Doc left hain't grieved inter weakness o' ther loss o' its mate," and Dead Knife Jim grasped the wrist of Van, the outlaw, until he writhed with pain, while he hissed forth:

"How dare you spoil my aim, Dead Knife?"

"I'll sp'le it right heur, an' ferever more amen, ef yer tries ther game on ag'in, an' yer shows yer coward natur' ter want ter take ther life o' ther man."

"I do not see why you should be friendly to him."

"I hain't; he are my inemy clean through; but he are actin' squar' fer us, squar' fer ther chief an' me, an' durned if I are goin' ter act mean ag'in' him, an' if yer attempts it ag'in, I'll let ther boys know your little game, an' knowin' thet ther Doc are ther only man we kin depend on now, ter git us out o' this eternal scrape, they'll dose yer with a lead pill without gittin' ther perscription from him, or I lies like a lawyer on ther wrong side o' a case."

"Well, drop it, Dead Knife, and I'll do no more to harm him until things look better for us."

"I'll watch yer all ther same, Van, for I don't intend ter die o' this hurt arm, when a Doc kin be kept alive ter look arter it, an' ther chief are my way o' thinkin'."

"All right; I had forgotten your arm and the chief's wound, and I was wrong, for we do need a doctor in camp now; that is certain."

"Yas, an' afore ther sun sets ther'll be more nor a few o' us thet needs a sargeon, an' some on 'em will be whar ther Doc kin do 'em no good, I'm a-thinkin'."

During this little scene the Indians had been routed, and the outlaws breathed more freely, while Captain Kit called out to the prisoner leader:

"Powell, you are well-named the Wizard Doctor, and I can swear that you are a Wizard Fighter, for we owe you our lives."

"Thank you, Captain Hyena," answered Frank Powell, who almost invariably called the chief by the name he thought suited him best.

Then he added in a tone of significance:

"My own life depended upon the conduct of your band, and I was anxious to see them do their best."

"You have a brave lot of men, Captain Hyena, and I am sorry to see them prefer throat-cutting to gain gold rather than work for it honestly."

The chief made no reply, while Doctor Powell went on quietly looking at the wounds received by the different men, dressing them as best he could, and at the same time watching those who were unharmed, and whom he had set to work strengthening the breastworks all in their power.

It was not long before the outlaws saw the In-

dians retreat in the direction of their comrades who were besieging the soldiers, and they broke forth into a cheer.

"Don't get glad too quick, men," he said, with a smile, "for they have gone to take the foes they believe the weakest, in spite of numbers, and will soon return, if successful, armed with weapons that will end our struggle, wild as they will be at their triumph."

These words sent a damper upon the outlaws, and Dead Knife Jim, whose arm the Doctor was then re-dressing, asked:

"How is we ter prevent that leetle cirkis, Doc?"

Before a reply could be given the excitement in the Indian force, occasioned by the coming in sight of Night Hawk, Janette and the black cowboys was discovered, and quickly Frank Powell turned his glass upon the rapidly riding party.

"That young girl, as I live, and my brother George, too, at the head of Monkton's black cowboys," he cried, with more excitement than it was ever his wont to show.

"What girl?" asked Captain Kit, eagerly.

"The one upon whom you brought so much sorrow and trouble, and whose father your men killed," was the frank, cold answer.

"Janette Joslyn?"

"Yes."

"And she has gone into the camp of the soldiers?"

"Yes."

"By Heaven, but she must not die."

"Not if she can be saved."

"But can she not be?"

"Perhaps."

"But how, Doctor Powell?"

"If you are willing to accept my parole, and will allow me to take ten of your men with the longest range rifles and best horses, I will ride out, when the red-skins charge the soldiers, and so worry them that they will not be able to take yonder works."

"But what will you do then?"

"Return here."

"I have your word for it that you will return?"

"Yes."

"You can go then."

"Thank you," and a few moments after, as has been seen, the Surgeon Scout rode out of the outlaws' little fort at the head of half a score of Red Angels.

CHAPTER XXXV.

FOES TO THE FRONT.

FRANK POWELL had seen enough of Indian-fighting on the plains to feel that things looked desperate, both for the soldiers and the outlaws.

Had Captain Burt retreated at first, ere he was surrounded, he could have successfully kept up a running fight.

But the gallant captain had no such idea.

He had been looking for Indians, and had found them.

He had been on the search for the surgeon of the fort, who had been missing, and discovered him.

For the Red Angels he was always on the lookout, and they, too, were before him, so he would not have retreated against even greater odds, where there was the least chance for success.

He had hoped to bring the outlaws to terms the following morning, and then pursue the red-skins back to their village.

But the red-skins had trebled in numbers during the night, and now threatened to carry themselves on to victory on the tide that had set in their favor.

If they caused a panic among the soldiers, then all was lost, for their entire force, hurled upon the outlaws, would certainly ride them down.

All these things Frank Powell took in at a glance, and he saw that some daring act would alone stem the tide of battle against them.

That act he decided upon.

It was to dash out against the Indians, carrying the war over the line.

There were but a few of the horses of the Red Angels left, and these were at once saddled.

Then all was made snug in the little barricade, those remaining there being told to kill any Indian who came within range.

With his long-range guns and fleet horses, the Doctor Scout felt that he could keep the Indians back, and also, if pressed hard, retreat before them to the little fort once more, and then make another dash.

By such maneuvers he would prevent them from concentrating upon the troopers, and doubtless the remainder of the Red Angel band would soon be along, for he did not doubt but that his messenger had gotten through.

He had given the messenger certain instructions, which, if carried out properly, would give the red-skins a scare and send them rapidly away in retreat, and as he rode out of the barricade he looked anxiously over the vast expanse for the coming of the remainder of the Red Angel band.

Anxiously the departure of the little party of horsemen was watched by those they left behind, as well as by those in the soldier barricade.

"What a sight! an army officer leading a gang of cut-throats," said Captain Burt to Lieutenant Ames, who stood by his side.

"Yes, a strange sight indeed; but Powell is playing some deep and desperate game, and it is for our good, captain."

"It could not be otherwise, or else why would he risk himself out of the barricade with that handful of men, and what can he do with them anyhow?"

"I do not know, sir; but certainly he has wonderful influence over men, for he is leading now, in the desperate danger of the outlaws, where he was a prisoner awhile ago."

"Yes, he is a remarkable man; but I will call that also remarkable brother of his and see if he can read what the surgeon is up to."

"Here, Powell!"

"Yes, Captain Burt," and Night Hawk stepped to the side of his commander.

"What does that move of your brother mean?"

"It means, sir, that desperate diseases require desperate remedies."

"As how?"

"Frank has seen that the Indians are concentrating on us, and if our troopers weaken, knows that all is lost, so he has convinced the outlaws that the best thing to do is to strike back—see, they are going to charge!"

"By Heaven! you are right! A handful of men charging hundreds," and Captain Burt eagerly watched the result.

The Indians in the mean while had seemed taken aback at the bold move of the outlaws, seemingly not knowing what to do, or how to understand it.

They had grouped together just out of range of the soldiers' carbines, and had assembled all their fighting men ready for a grand charge, while back in the divide were a few more with the wounded and dead.

With the soldier barricade on the left, the outlaws a half-mile to the right, and the Indians a quarter of a mile distant in the front of each, and an equal distance from both little forts, the three forces formed a triangle, with the Surgeon Scout and his band riding directly toward the Sioux.

When Night Hawk called out that the little band of horsemen intended to charge, Frank Powell and his men suddenly urged their horses into a run, just as the Indians had started to move toward them, dividing as though to surround them.

But suddenly the white horsemen were seen to halt as one man, a rifle went to the shoulder of each, and a platoon of soldiers could not have fired more promptly together.

With the crack of the rifles the doom of several warriors was sealed, and several ponies were toppled over.

This taught the Indians that they were crowding too close, for their arrows yet fell far short.

But, Frank Powell and his men now formed in single file, and began to ride in a circle, which gradually grew in size, and seemed not to care whether the red-skins got between them and the forts or not.

As they thus rode, the little band sent a steady fire at the red-skins, Powell firing first, then the next man, and the next, and thus on, without a break, the shooting turns running steadily around and around to each man.

Wild at this style of firing, and the fatal results, the warriors dashed rapidly around the little band to cut them off, and distinctly came the command from the Surgeon Scout:

"At the fort there—let them have it!"

"Fire! all fire!" shouted Night Hawk, and the carbines of the soldiers flashed forth a fusillade, while cheer after cheer arose at the clever manner in which the Doctor Scout had inveigled the red-skins in easy range of the troops, for in their anxiety to entrap the outlaws, they had not noticed their danger.

"Charge!" yelled the Surgeon Scout, ere they could rally from their consternation, and firing as they charged, the outlaws broke the Indian line, causing them to scatter before them.

This sent a few again near the soldiers, and the main party were driven back so rapidly, to escape those deadly long-range rifles which mowed them down, while their arrows fell short, that they retreated precipitately, to suddenly find themselves under the fire of the Red Angels left in their little stronghold.

Maddened by being thus beaten, and half-bewildered, they charged boldly down upon the outlaw fort; but a galling fire met them, and Powell and his horsemen pushing them, they broke in disorder, circled around, and again forming a compact mass, rushed furiously down upon the soldiers' retreat.

"Right about, men! and charge them again!" shouted Frank Powell, as he saw the Indians, driven to frenzy, were making a bold rush for the besieged soldiers.

The reckless charge of the outlaws, caused the red-skins to divide their attention at once, but the fort was still their goal, and they dashed right up to the breastwork, and it looked as if all was lost, when a cheer came from the out-

law barricade, and was answered by the Red Angels under the Surgeon Scout.

What could it mean? An instant the red-skins paused to discover the cause, and that moment of hesitancy lost them the battle, for the soldiers, almost unnerved with panic, rallied and delivered a well-aimed revolver volley, while Frank Powell charged with his backers, their repeaters in hand rattling forth death, and behind them, back on the prairie, was visible a large body of horsemen rushing to the rescue.

One wild yell of savage hate and disappointment commingled, and the Sioux broke in mad fear and rode away, leaving their dead upon the field, but dragging their wounded with them.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AFTER THE COMBAT.

As the Indians broke in wild confusion, it could be seen that they had no idea of renewing the fight, for their retreat had begun in real disorder, the band over in the divide, having the dead and wounded in charge, moving off rapidly, without waiting for their flying comrades to come up, seeming to realize that if they had failed to capture either fort from the numbers defending them, with the reinforcements coming over the prairie they would have a hard time of it to escape destruction themselves.

When the Sioux started in flight, the Surgeon Scout and his outlaw followers went in hot pursuit, and the rattle of their long-range rifles was continuous.

As the soldiers beheld the stampede, and the reinforcements coming over the prairie, they cheered themselves hoarse; but watching the latter closely, they saw that they were not, as they had hoped, cavalry from the fort, but a band of horsemen, who wore a suspicious look that caused them to be set down as friendly to the outlaws, rather than the troops.

This belief was soon rendered a certainty by seeing the relief party dash up to the barricade of the Red Angels, and entering it, dismount after awhile, while their horses were led out and staked upon the prairie near to feed.

Seeing that he would be still confronted by a force his superior in numbers, Captain Burt decided to remain in his barricade, for he had not horses left for more than half his men, and was hampered by the severe wounding of Lieutenant Ames and a dozen men, while four soldiers had been slain.

"Those fellows were friendly, Night Hawk, in coming to our aid; but I am confident it was your brother who forced it, prisoner though he was, and now they may turn against us, and we will still be besieged," and Captain Burt turned to the scout, who stood by his side, coolly watching the outlaws through his glass.

"Yes, sir, it is best to be prepared; but there comes Frank back again, and he has picked up a number of good Indian ponies, which would give us a lift if we could get them."

"Yes, I cannot mount half of my men; but see, the Doctor is not coming here."

"No, he certainly is heading off toward the outlaw stronghold."

"Why is that?"

"I can only judge that he is still a prisoner, Captain Burt."

"Yet he is the leader of those men, and has seemed to have general control throughout."

"True, Captain Burt; but they knew my brother's skill and abilities as a plainsman, and, realizing the danger of all, have doubtless permitted him to lead; but now the danger is over you will find he is still the prisoner of the Red Angels."

"But why does he not come to us and report?"

"I can tell you no more than you know, Captain Burt."

"We must wait and see what will be the result of all this," answered Night Hawk, and he again turned his glass upon the outlaw barricade.

But Captain Burt was anxious and worried, and called out:

"Night Hawk, ride out to meet Surgeon Powell, and tell him I wish him to report here at once as Lieutenant Ames and a number of the men need immediate surgical aid."

"I will tell him, sir, but I fear that it is out of his power to obey."

So saying, Night Hawk threw himself upon his horse and, leaping him over the barrier, rode rapidly out to head his brother and the outlaws off.

The Red Angels at their stronghold were watching all that transpired, and, apparently alarmed by the act of Night Hawk, when they recognized who he was, and aware what a desperate fight two such men could make even against those with the surgeon, they sent four horsemen out to watch the movements of the Soldier Scout.

"Look out for those fellows, Night Hawk, for they seem inclined to cut you off," called out Captain Burt.

Night Hawk waved his hand in response, and rode on with only a cursory glance at the quartette of horsemen who had left the outlaw barricade.

As he drew near his brother's party he came to a halt and quietly awaited their approach.

But Frank Powell also drew rein when he was within long pistol-shot of his brother, and the four men in the rear of Night Hawk followed suit.

"Ho, George, how goes it with you all?" called out the Surgeon Scout, being the first to speak.

"We have suffered considerably, and as Lieutenant Ames and some of the men are severely wounded, Captain Burt begs that you will report at once to him."

"I am sorry, George, that I cannot come; but I am a prisoner to the Red Angels, and consequently not my own master; but I will ask the chief's permission to come and see poor Ames and the men, if only for a few moments."

With a wave of his hand Frank Powell rode on, while Night Hawk turned and went slowly back to the barricade to report what his brother had said.

During this short conversation between the brothers, the outlaws had watched Frank Powell closely, seemingly fearing that he would leave them, or at last attempt to do so, even against the odds opposing him.

"It was with a sigh of relief, therefore, that they saw him ride on, for, even with their numbers, they cared not for a hand-to-hand fight with two such men as the Surgeon Scout and his brother, Night Hawk Powell, were known to be."

While the Doctor rode back to the outlaw stronghold, Night Hawk returned to the captain and told him just what had been said.

"The Doctor is right, for he well knew that it would come to blows if he attempted to come, so he will try and get the outlaw chief to allow him to come here, and will then remain, said Captain Burt."

Night Hawk smiled at this, and then said:

"To come here, Captain Burt, Frank will have to give his parole to Captain Kit to return, unless he can buy his pardon from him."

"Of course, Night Hawk."

"If he gives such parole he will keep it."

"What! you mean that he will consider a parole given to those red-handed cut-throats binding?"

"Yes, sir."

"There is no man, Powell, more anxious to keep faith with the world and shield my honor than I am; but a pledge so made, under force, is not, in my opinion, binding, and if Surgeon Powell attempts to keep such a parole, by Heaven, I will put him under arrest for it, if I make him my foe for life," and Captain Burt spoke with considerable excitement, while Night Hawk's dark, handsome face remained unmoved as he calmly surveyed the outlaws through his glass.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FRANK POWELL'S PLEDGE.

UPON his return to the barrier of horseflesh, earth, saddles and blankets, which had protected the lives of the outlaws from the arrows of the Indians, a strange scene presented itself to the view of the Doctor Scout.

The horses had been staked out around the inclosure, the barrier was full of arrows, and about it were the outlaws gathered in groups and talking earnestly.

The four men, who had ridden out when Night Hawk rode off to meet his brother, had just returned, bearing with them the dead body of one of their number, and another one wounded, and who had been of the Surgeon Scout's party.

Within was a double row, long and ghastly at a first glance, for they appeared to be dead men.

But a closer scrutiny showed that they were effigies, or "dummies," as they were nothing more than a suit of clothes stuffed with prairie grass, and having boots and hats attached, while they were made fast astraddle of a saddle.

Dismounting from his horse, while he glanced casually over the faces of the half-dozen newcomers, who had arrived with the mounted effigies which had so frightened the Sioux, the Doctor walked over to where the chief lay, attended by the negro, Brick, and with Dead Knife Jim near by.

"Well, Doctor Powell, you have handled my men far better than I could have done, and gained a splendid victory," said Captain Kit, holding his hand toward the surgeon.

Appearing not to see the offered hand, Frank Powell answered:

"You have a gallant set of men, Captain Hyena, and it is a pity you lead them to devote their courage to so bad a purpose; but I see that our foot-messenger got through all right, and that your pack-horses and their guards have arrived, and put the Indians to flight, too."

"Yes, your device worked well, for my man told me the instructions you gave him, and the boys say the red-skins ran like deer, believing a large force was upon them, while the soldiers are expecting we will attack them with our overwhelming numbers," and the chief laughed.

Frank Powell made no reply, but went to work to re-dress the wound of the outlaw leader, after

which he turned to Dead Knife Jim and did a like service for him.

"Now, Captain Hyena, I will look after the rest of the wounded, and then I have a favor to ask."

"Well, Doctor?"

"A lieutenant in the troopers' party, and a dear friend of mine, has been severely, though not seriously wounded, and also some of the soldiers are also suffering with wounds, and I desire to go and do all in my power for them."

"Why, do you expect me to give you up?"

"Not without an equivalent, and that I am willing to give."

"Name it."

"I have about five thousand dollars in money and property at the fort, and I will pledge myself to turn that over to you within three days, if you will allow me to go."

"Not for ten times the sum, sir."

"Then I have nothing more to offer; but I will give my parole that I will return within two hours, if you will permit me to go and dress the wounds of Lieutenant Ames and his soldiers."

"A man's word is little worth, Doctor Powell, where his life is concerned."

"I hold my pledge as dear as my life, sir."

"And I believe you; but you will tell the commander of the soldiers that he still outnumber us for the greater part of our men are stuffed suits of clothes."

"I will not if you so ask it."

"And you will pledge yourself to return within two hours?"

"I will pledge myself to return, Captain Hyena, as soon as I have thoroughly attended to the wounds of the soldiers who demand my services."

"Powell, I will do with you what I will not with another man living," said the chief, earnestly.

"Well, sir?"

"I will take your word and accept your pledge."

"I thank you, Captain Hyena."

"One moment."

"Well?"

"There is one person in yonder camp that I wish to get in my power."

"Who is he?"

"It is Janette Joslyn."

"That poor girl."

"Yes, and if you will manage for me to entrap her, I will set you free."

"You are a fool, as well as a villain, Captain Hyena, if you think I would accept my freedom, or my life even, upon terms so vile," said the Surgeon Scout, indignantly, and then he added:

"As you give me permission to visit my companions, I will go at once, for there are those there who sadly need my aid."

"And you will return?"

"You have my pledge, sir," was the cold reply, and mounting the animal he had ridden since he had been a prisoner to the outlaws, the Surgeon Scout rode over toward the soldier camp the eyes of all upon him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE SURGEON SCOUT'S SACRIFICE.

As the Surgeon Scout approached the military camp, riding at a rapid gallop, as though he knew that he was sorely needed there, the soldiers gave vent to cheer after cheer in his honor, for they were well aware that they owed their lives to him, while also he was the most popular man in the fort.

As he dismounted, Captain Burt grasped his hand and said earnestly:

"God-bless you, Powell, for we owe all to you; but here are others to greet you," and the captain yielded his grasp upon the doctor's hand as Night Hawk stepped forward and took it firmly, though nothing more was said between the two brothers than for each to utter the other's name:

"Frank!"

"George!"

"And another one is here to welcome you, Doctor," said the captain, and Janette Joslyn glided forward and clasped the surgeon's hand in both her own.

Twice she essayed to speak, but her heart was too full, and Frank Powell spoke up quickly:

"Indeed I am glad to meet you all, after all we have gone through, and it certainly looked dismal for us at one time; but my time is limited, and I must do what I can for poor Ames and the men."

"Your time limited, Powell?" asked Captain Burt.

"Yes, captain, for I am merely on a couple of hours' parole."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply, sir, that I am a prisoner to the Red Angels, whose chief, Captain Hyena, allowed me to come and look after my

wounded comrades, upon condition that I would return within a given time."

"And do you consider this parole binding, Doctor Powell?" asked Captain Burt.

"I do, sir."

"A parole given to cut-throats?"

"I consider my word as good, Captain Burt, whether given to an Indian or renegade."

"What the one may be to whom I give my pledge, is not the question, but it is my word I keep if in my power to do so."

"I cannot allow this sacrifice, Powell."

"We will not discuss it now, if you please, captain, for I must look after the wounded," and Frank Powell walked over to where Lieutenant Ames lay, suffering from two arrow wounds, one of them being in the shoulder and severe.

"Ah, Doc, you are more than welcome, but I am sorry I am not able to give you a good grip with my right hand, for you see the reds have marked me for life," said the young officer, in a cheery way.

"Not as bad as that, Ames; but they have given you an honorable scar or two."

"Hold on, Doc, and see to Corporal Green first, for he is worse than I am," remarked the self-sacrificing young officer.

"How is he wounded?"

"A musket-ball in the body."

"Then I will look to him first," and the Surgeon Scout hastily walked over to where the corporal lay.

"Well, corporal, how are you, my man?" he said, in his gentle way.

No answer came, and a private soldier near, who had an arrow wound in the head, said:

"I guess he's sleeping, Doctor."

"Yes, a sleep from which he will never awaken," was the low response, and the surgeon returned to the lieutenant.

"What! am I worse than the corporal, Doctor?"

"The corporal needs no aid from me, lieutenant."

"He is dead?"

"Yes."

"Poor, brave fellow; this has been a hard day for us, Doctor."

"Yes, but it might have been worse; but let me see what the reds have done for you."

"Here, George, you are already half a surgeon, so come and help me," and the Doctor called out to his brother, who quickly came to his side.

Then the officer's uniform was cut away, the wounds examined, dressed, and Lieutenant Ames expressed himself as most comfortable and in very little pain.

Then the surgeon and his brother Night Hawk went the rounds of the wounded, and the work was quickly and skillfully done.

"Now I will have to leave them to you, George, and you know all that is needed to be done; but let us take another look at Ames."

The young lieutenant greeted them with a smile, as he lay upon his blankets, and said:

"I have just been visited by that lovely girl, Miss Joslyn. Who is she, Doctor?"

"She has doubtless told you her story?"

"Yes; in a word."

"I can tell you no more about her."

"I found her by the side of her dying father, and I left her on the back of my horse as he was running the gantlet of the Red Angels."

"I have been the outlaws' prisoner since, and she, it seems, reached the ranch of Major Monkton, where I bade her go."

"That is all that I can tell you."

"Well, Frank, I can tell you more, and it is that the girl is the pluckiest little woman I ever saw, for you must know what she went through after you left her, as Zip, old Monkton's black cowboy captain, told me all," and Night Hawk went on to tell the story of Janette's race for life, the falling of her horse, and her daring stand at bay, and in fact all that had occurred to her up to her coming into the barrier with him and her negro followers to share the fate of the soldiers.

"She is a most remarkable girl," said the Doctor.

"Yes, a girl in appearance, a woman in character, and the equal of a man in nerve and deeds, and she showed her true nature in coming on the hunt for you, after what you had done for her."

"On the hunt for me, Ames?"

"Yes; did not George say that she borrowed the major's black cowboys to come and look you up?"

"It was very noble of her; but, George, I wish you would guide her back across the river on her way to Major Monkton's, where she will live, at least for the present."

"I'll do it with pleasure. Frank, but there is no need of a guide, as she has those black cowboys."

"True, they are indeed good guides, and fighters, too."

"The captain wishes Miss Joslyn to make her home at the fort, Powell," said Lieutenant Ames.

"She can do as she likes, of course," answered the surgeon, and he was about to bid the lieutenant farewell when Captain Burt approached, accompanied by Janette, and said:

"Surgeon Powell, I wish you would use your influence with Miss Joslyn and get her to accompany us to the fort, and make it her home."

"I know that Miss Joslyn would be more than welcome there, and find many kind friends; but I do not feel at liberty to urge her in her decision," said Powell.

There was something in the surgeon's manner that the young girl seemed to fathom, for she looked him squarely in the face, while she answered:

"You are at liberty, Doctor Powell, to bid me do as you think best, and I would be governed by your wish; and believing that you would prefer me to return to Prairie Rest Ranch, as I would myself prefer, I will do so."

Both Captain Burt and Lieutenant Ames looked disappointed, but the former said, with gallantry:

"There is no standing out against a fair lady's decision, so I yield; but, Miss Joslyn, we will, as a *protegee* of our gallant surgeon, consider you an adopted Daughter of the Fort, and come over to see you at Prairie Rest Ranch, while we will expect to see you often at our fort, where you will find yourself a heroine."

"Doctor, as Miss Joslyn has signified her intention of taking her leave, will you take a few men and escort her part way?"

"It would give me pleasure to do so under other circumstances, Captain Burt; but, as I told you, I am under parole, and must now return to the Red Angel camp."

"Nonsense," and the captain bit his lip with vexation, while Janette said quickly:

"I certainly would not permit Surgeon Powell to leave his duties to go with me, especially as I have ample escort in my brave black followers."

"And pardon me, Miss Joslyn, if I urge that you remain here for the present, as there would be danger in your leaving."

"What? Do you expect an attack from the outlaws?"

"No, captain, but did Miss Joslyn depart with her black escort only, the Red Angels might follow her, and if you send an escort with her, it would weaken your force so that they would, perhaps, attack you, and I would offer a suggestion, if you allow me."

"Certainly; speak out, Powell."

"I would dispatch a courier at once to the fort, to have the major send a relief party with ambulances to you, and also a squadron of cavalry to track those Indians, for I noticed Wolf Fang was the chief at their head, and, if they are not pursued sharply, they will tarry long enough to do a great deal of damage to the scattered ranches."

"As for yourself, I would hold my position here until the outlaws departed, which I trust will be soon, and then remove your position to the stream three miles away, and await the coming of aid, for some of the men are too badly wounded to remove except by ambulance, or stretcher."

"Your advice is good, Doctor, and shall be followed to the letter. I will start a scout at once, and—"

"Shall I go, sir?" asked Night Hawk.

"No, Night Hawk, you are too useful a man to spare, and I rely upon you for advice."

"My brother also is a pretty fair surgeon, captain, and the wounded will need him in my absence."

"You still persist in returning to those Red Devils, as they should be called?"

"I do, sir."

"Powell, I will not allow you to sacrifice yourself, and before I submit to it will have you seized and bound," hotly declared the captain.

The eyes of Frank Powell flashed fire, and his face paled; but he said with perfect calmness:

"You have the power, Captain Burt, to arrest me, and put me in irons if so you will, for I will not resist the soldiers of my Government."

"But, sir, should you do so, I will take it as a personal affront, and hold you responsible for the act the moment I am at liberty."

All present knew Frank Powell well, and that he was in deadly earnest not one doubted.

Captain Burt also so understood it, but he was a great admirer of the surgeon, regarded him in the light of sincere friendship, and wished to save him from the power of the Red Angels at whatever cost.

"Powell, Heaven knows I want no quarrel with you, and neither do I wish to see you return to the clutches of those fiends, so let me send a messenger to them offering a ransom?"

"They will accept none, sir, for I offered every dollar I had in the world."

"Then, while you are here, keeping your parole, I will take my men and attack them, if they do outnumber me."

"Be warned, captain, and do nothing rash, for you saw what a few of those men did against a large force of Indians."

"No, sir, I must go at once, so will say good-by."

"Well, I will be governed by your advice, Powell."

"And I also, Doctor Powell," said Janette, sadly.

A few words of farewell, and Frank Powell rode away from the little barricade, while all gazed after him with sorrow in their faces, for they feared that he was going to his death at the hands of the merciless Red Angels of the Overland.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE RED ANGELS RETREAT.

FRANK POWELL did not ride back in a gallop to the outlaw camp, the same as he went to the bivouac of his comrades in arms.

His heart was not in his return to the Red Angels.

He knew that death stared him in the face, and there was but one of the entire band whom he would not have seen hanged for their crime with but little regret.

That one was Dead Knife Jim.

To his surprise Night Hawk had told him how he had been warned by the suffering, one-armed outlaw.

Dead Knife Jim had said nothing to him about his noble work, before or after; he had simply known how anxious the Surgeon Scout had been to warn his comrades of their danger, and when others had refused the tempting offer of five hundred dollars to do the work, he had quietly slipped out of the camp and accomplished it, though suffering untold agony.

"That is a remarkable man, and he will find a good friend in me," the Doctor muttered, his thoughts upon the maimed outlaw as he rode up.

"Well, Doctor, you are back again."

"Your word is gilt-edge in this camp now," said Captain Kit, as the surgeon dismounted and advanced toward him.

"A man deserves no credit, Captain Hyena, for keeping his word," was the cold response.

"You found work to do over there?"

"Yes, but my friend was not as bad as I feared, though several of the men have dangerous wounds."

"A horseman has just ridden away from the soldier camp, captain," called out Van, the outlaw, coming forward.

"Hal! what does that mean, Doctor Powell?" said the chief, suspiciously.

"It means, sir, that I suggested to Captain Burt to send a courier to the fort, asking for a relief party to be sent to him, and also that a squadron should be put on the trail of Wolf Fang's band, to hasten them along in their retreat."

"That is so; I can see nothing against that, Van."

"There may have been a large relief party ordered here, sir," said the man, with a sarcastic grin.

"Ah! did you so suggest, Powell?"

"I did not, sir."

"He would say so, captain whether he had or—"

The sentence was not completed, for, quick as the flight of a bird, the Doctor Scout sprung to his feet and sent his fist hard in the face of the outlaw, felling him like death would have done, and stunning him so completely that he lay motionless where he had fallen.

Captain Kit laughed and said:

"You hit hard, Powell, and have laid Van out senseless."

"He seems to have a devilish grudge against you."

"It matters not to me, for I prefer his hate to his friendship," was the cool reply.

"Yes; you seem not to know the word fear."

"When I learn it, I would wish to die, for a coward's life must be a fearful existence indeed."

"I believe I would rather be as vile a sinner as you are, Captain Hyena, than a coward."

The words were uttered in the low, musical voice of the Doctor Scout, but they were burning with sarcasm, and the chief felt their full force, and changed the subject by saying:

"I suppose that you told Captain Burt of my dummies?"

"I did not, sir."

"That was strange."

"On the contrary; for had I done so, he would certainly have attacked you, to keep me from coming back to you."

"He thinks your force greater than his, and it is best for him to so believe."

"And it is best for me to be on the move, especially as the captain's relief party may be a large one, as Van suggested."

"It may, or may not be, Captain Hyena, for nothing was said about that; but I think you had better be on the move, as you have no water here, and until your men recuperate, you had best seek a safer camp."

"That is advice I will follow, for I deem it good."

"Please kick Van, there, back to his senses, and we will move at once."

Frank Powell stepped forward, and by an exhibition of his great strength, that won the admiration of the chief, he raised the outlaw to his feet, and held a small vial of ammonia, which he took from his case, under his nose.

The effect was magical, for Van gave a yell, and, half-strangled, darted away, while Powell said, with a smile:

"I knew that he was shamming, as he recovered his senses some moments ago; but, Captain Hyena, you must not laugh, sir, for you are by no means out of danger."

"I cannot help laughing at Van, for he shot off like an arrow; but I'll be quiet."

"You will need to be, and the sooner you reach a safe camp the better for you and that brave fellow, Dead Knife Jim, too, for I am anxious about him, as he will not keep still."

"Anxious about an outlaw?" sneered the chief.

"Yes, as a patient, but in your case I am anxious about myself, for if you die on my hands your men will kill me, and, if you live, you may do the same, if the reputation you bear does not belie you."

"Powell, you are the most fearless man I ever met."

"Don't flatter me, Captain Hyena, but watch yourself and try and recover, if only to give me the satisfaction of some day seeing you hanged, if I should survive long enough to witness that very interesting spectacle."

The outlaw chief bit his lips but made no reply, while Frank Powell gave the order to the outlaws to strike camp and get on the march.

The captured Indian ponies, with the outlaws' horses, were then brought in, the effigies were mounted and started on the way quickly, to keep up the deception to the soldiers, and the wounded followed under the care of the prisoner surgeon, who was seen by his comrades in the distance slowly riding away in the midst of the band of Red

Angels, men who had often sworn to have his life, and upon whose head their chief had offered a reward months before.

CHAPTER XL.

CAPTAIN KIT'S THREAT.

SLOWLY over the prairie filed the band of Red Angels, until the sun neared the horizon in the west, and then they came to a halt under the shelter of some cottonwoods that grew thick along the banks of a swift-running stream.

No other camping-ground had offered itself to the party during the day, only one rivulet being crossed, and there a halt had been made to fill the canteens with water, and give the thirsty animals a chance to quench their thirst after the dry camp of the night before.

Knowing that they had to press on to reach the spot where he intended to camp, and knowing that the chief and the other wounded must have rest, or die, Doctor Powell had not halted for dinner, and the men were glad enough to seek rest and food when they reached the shelter of the cottonwoods.

While some set to work to build fires, and others to prepare the game killed that day, Surgeon Powell, with a few men, devoted himself to preparing a shelter for the wounded.

The negro, Brick, seemed an adept at this kind of work, and, with the aid of things taken from the pack saddles, a really comfortable shanty was built, which would wholly protect them from the rain, for a storm was coming up.

Observing this, the men threw up what shelters they could for themselves, and hardly had they finished their supper, when the storm swept down upon them, the rain falling in torrents.

"I am perfectly dry, thanks to you, Doctor, in spite of the fierce rain, and you seem to understand the elements as well as medicine and surgery, to detect the coming storm."

"How are the men fixed?" said the chief, addressing the Surgeon Scout, who sat in the shanty near him.

"The wounded are all as safely housed as you are, and the men, I believe, took my advice and pitched their tents as best they could."

"This rain will thoroughly wash out our trail, Powell, so that the soldiers cannot follow us, and I confess I am glad not to be attacked in our present condition."

"It will destroy the trail, yes; but there is one who can track you here, if the troops care to follow you."

"Ah! Who is that?"

"My brother," was the reply.

"Night Hawk Powell?"

"Yes, he is so called from the fact that he seems to trail as well by night as by day."

"I have heard strange stories of his power as a trailer, and of yours, too; but where there is no trail left, I do not think even he can find one."

"He will find it as I would, did I strike your trail in pursuit of you."

"But how?"

"By common sense."

"Where Indian cunning fails, common sense will also."

"No."

"You believe that he can track us, then?"

"I know it."

"Do you mind telling me how?"

"Not at all."

"I shall be delighted to know."

"In the first place, he knows the spot to start from?"

"Yes."

"Tracking you to the place where the rain washes out your trail, he at least knows the direction you are going?"

"Certainly."

"He is aware that you are carrying your wounded with you, and not knowing that three-fourths of your supposed horsemen are dummies, he naturally would think you were short of horses."

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, common sense would prompt him to know that you wished to gain the nearest point where you could give your wounded a rest, reorganize and secure more horses, and his knowledge of the country would show him that there are only a few such places near, and the direction you were traveling

when the storm washed out your trail, tells him you were making for the Birdwood Hills."

"Ha! how did you know that the Birdwood Hills was my destination?" quickly asked the chief.

"By the same reasoning that I have told you my brother, the Night Hawk, will know it," was the reply.

"By Heaven! Powell, you decide me to push on from here at dawn, though I did intend to rest a few days, as this traveling is terrible to all of us who are wounded."

"Once we reach the hills, we are safe from any cavalry force your fort will send out."

"Yes, for they deem your strength far greater than it is; but I could wipe you out with two-score good troopers from the Fifth Cavalry," was the reply of the Doctor Scout.

"By my faith, but I believe you, Surgeon Frank Powell, and the very fact that you may do so will weigh heavily against your leaving this place alive, and you can make up your mind to that," was the threatening response of the chief.

But if it made any impression upon the Doctor Scout, the flickering fire just outside the shanty did not reveal it upon his face, as he quietly wrapped his blanket about him and laid down to seek the rest he so greatly needed.

But he had heard every word of Captain Kit's threat, and being forewarned of what might happen, determined to forearm himself accordingly.

CHAPTER XLI.

NIGHT HAWK TAKES THE TRAIL.

It was certainly a great relief for those in the soldier camp to see the Red Angels depart, though their joy was mingled with sadness at the thought that they carried with them the gallant surgeon as a prisoner, and one who, when their crimes were taken into consideration, might be put to death to satiate their hatred for him.

As soon as the outlaws disappeared over a roll of the prairie, Captain Burt gave the orders to move camp. Night Hawk telling him that over on a stream some miles distant was a good camping-ground, where they could await the coming of the relief party from the fort in comparative comfort and safety.

The wounded were therefore borne as tenderly as possible to the designated spot, and the soldiers began to form a camp, which would protect them from the weather, and also be a kind of fortification.

Arriving at the camping-ground, Janette, at the earnest solicitation of Captain Burt and his officers, tarried to take supper, and then, knowing that it would be moonlight before very long, and with confidence in Zip's ability as a guide, she started upon her return to Prairie Rest Ranch, for she felt that Major Monkton would be most anxious about her and his black cowboys.

With many wishes for her happiness, they bade her farewell, and saw her ride away in the gathering twilight, her black bravos at her back, and Zip directing the course she was to ride by a word now and then.

"Captain Burt, if you are willing, I would like to scout after that brave little girl, for I am not wholly convinced that there are not several small bands of Indians roaming about that may stumble upon her," and Night Hawk presented himself before Captain Burt, as he reclined on his blanket, his saddle for a pillow, and smoking a fragrant cigar, while he chatted with Lieutenant Ames.

"Certainly, Night Hawk, for I am anxious about her myself, as it is a long ride to Monkton's ranch, and brave as she and her black bravos are, they might get into a bad scrape."

"They might, indeed," added Lieutenant Ames, who was suffering from his wound, through having been moved to another camp.

"But first tell me," the captain continued, "what are we to do about that noble brother of yours?"

"How do you mean, sir?"

"Is there no way that we can recapture him?"

"I can see no way at present; but if you will allow me to start on a scout, as soon as the relief comes, I will see if anything can be done to get Frank free."

"You can go, and take what men you please."

"I care for no men, sir, for if I was seen with troops trailing the Red Angels, I believe they would expect an attempt at rescue and at once kill Frank."

"By Jove, but you are right, and I will not urge it to the major, as a force sent after the outlaws would certainly cause poor Powell's death; but would you go alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you are at liberty to do as you think best in the matter."

Night Hawk bowed, and leaving the two officers, who gave him a "God speed you," in earnest tones, he mounted his superb horse, Flyer, and rode off on the track of Janette and her bravos.

At a sweeping gallop he went along for a dozen miles, his horse showing no fatigue whatever, and suddenly he discovered moving objects ahead.

It might be that he had overtaken Janette and her party, and perhaps it was a band of strolling Indians, while buffalo and elk were liable to be found there.

At any rate he was cautious, though he believed he had overtaken Janette.

In the west the sky was brightening where the moon was soon to appear above the horizon, and the Scout so changed his position as to bring the objects ahead between him and the face of the moon as it rose.

Others might have dashed on and felt sure that what he saw was Janette and her cowboys.

But Night Hawk was a perfect scout, and had the patience of an Indian, so threw himself from his horse and, lying upon the ground, waited.

Soon the moon appeared, and, changing his position, the scout soon had what had caught his quick eyes plainly photographed against the bright surface.

"Injuns!"

The one word told what he had discovered.

"There are some twenty of them, and they are searching for the trail of the girl, while they were waiting for the moonlight to follow it."

"Yes, they have found it and are off, and will overtake her at the ford."

"Now, Flyer, you have work to do, and do it well, for the life of a lovely girl depends upon you, good horse."

So saying, Night Hawk sprung into his saddle, and, wheeling off obliquely, went at a telling pace over the prairie.

CHAPTER XLII.

A PICTURE OF THE PAST.

WHEN Janette and her escort of black cowboys left the camp of the troopers they rode on at a fair pace, for the young girl was most anxious to return and relieve the mind of Major Monkton, who she knew must be most anxious regarding her.

As she rode along, Zip directing her course, she could not but think what a change had come over her life.

A short year before she and her father had lived happily in their Eastern home, with wealth at their command, and warm friends.

But a sorrow had fallen upon them, brought on by one who had been as a brother to her, and a son to her father.

To this boy's father, Richard Joslyn had owed his rise in life, and laid the foundation of his wealth.

But reverses had come upon his benefactor, and broken in health by his losses, he had died, leaving his son penniless.

Instantly Mr. Joslyn had taken the boy, then in his fifteenth year, to live with him, adopting him as his own son, and learning to love him as a father would a devoted child.

Thus several years passed away, and the youth reached the threshold of manhood, and suddenly it dawned upon his adopted father that he was leading a very fast life.

Loving him as he would his own son, Mr. Joslyn remonstrated with him, begged him to change his evil career, and paid his debts for him.

So it went on for another year, when one morning Mr. Joslyn woke up to find himself ruined, for to save his erring *protege* he paid forged paper to the extent of his fortune.

The wild, reckless youth, afraid to face his

benefactor and more than father, departed, leaving a letter of contrition, and promising to lead a different life in future, so that he could pay back every dollar he had squandered of Richard Joslyn's property.

In the kindness of his heart the ruined man believed him, and almost broken-hearted at his losses, he got together what little he had saved, and, having honorably paid all, departed for the West to build up a new home and fortune.

Still believing and trusting in the youth who had ruined him, Mr. Joslyn had never told Janette that the one she loved as a brother had committed crime, but put it down to speculations that had gone against them, and she had never dreamed that Paul Murdock, for such was his name, had done that which would have sent him to become, for long years, the inmate of a prison.

By easy stages Richard Joslyn and his daughter had come westward, hunting, fishing, and enjoying the free life they led, as they came along, until the maiden, an expert rider and fair shot from early girlhood, became a superb marksman and splendid horsewoman.

How well these accomplishments served her the reader has already seen.

And how reverses had dogged the steps of her poor father, ending in death, and she had become an orphan in a strange land, was what was in her thoughts as she rode along over the prairie that night at the head of her colored guard.

"Oh, Paul, if you were only near me to share my sorrows!" she cried, as a feeling of desolation, most utter, swept over her.

Then she continued, murmuring to herself:

"And that noble man who so befriended me is in danger of death at the hands of my poor father's murderers, and I will lose him, too.

"That dear old man who says I shall be his daughter is all that I have to cling to, and I will devote myself to him.

"But there are two things I must do," and the moonlight showed her lips closed firmly, and her eyes flash for an instant, as she remained silent, and then continued:

"I must avenge my poor, poor father, and do what I can to save that splendid man, Doctor Powell, and return the debts of gratitude I owe to him.

"I will talk to Major Monkton about it, and see if something cannot be done, for I can do much, as I am no longer a child but a woman, and one who possesses the heart, the will, the nerve and endurance of a man to do and dare.

"Ay, and I will do and dare all that man will to save Surgeon Powell from death—Oh! what is it, Zip?" and she turned as the negro rode up.

"There is a horseman ahead, missy."

"I see him; but we shall have nothing to fear from one man, Zip," was the quiet response, as the eyes of Janette fell upon a horse and rider directly in their way, and about a hundred yards distant.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE AMBUSH.

THE horseman who barred the way of Janette and the black cowboys could be distinctly seen in the moonlight, and it was observable that his hands were raised above his head, as though indicating that his intentions were not hostile.

"It seem ter be Massa Night Hawk, missy," said Zip.

"You are right; it is the scout, Mr. Powell," answered Janette, and she urged her horse more rapidly forward.

"Why, Mr. Powell! is it really you?" she said, as she drew near.

"Yes, Miss Joslyn, and wholly at your service," was the reply.

"They call your brother the Wizard Doctor, I believe, and I certainly think they should name you the Magic Scout, for we left you back at the camp three hours ago."

"Yes."

"And yet you are here before us?"

"Yes, and for a reason, which I will make known as we ride along."

"I certainly shall be glad to know how you can change your localities in such a magical way, for I would like to possess the same power."

"It is due to my good horse here, Flyer, for he did the work."

"But I felt anxious about you, after you left, so got permission to follow."

"And why anxious?"

"Well, Wolf Fang's band, not being pressed in their retreat, will naturally break into small parties, and spreading over the country do all the damage they can."

"Fearing that you might meet such a party I came after you."

"It was certainly most kind of you; but we have seen no trace of an Indian."

"I have."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; the moonlight, as I followed you, revealed a party of warriors slowly examining your trail."

"Finding it, they at once started in pursuit, while I, knowing where they would be most likely to overtake you, made a flank ride of it and headed you off, by pushing Flyer pretty hard."

"You are indeed a good friend, Mr. Powell, to come and share our danger; but what do you advise?"

"A lesson to the red-skins."

"In what way?"

"You see that timber ahead?"

"Yes."

"It is a thick grove on the banks of a swift-running stream, and there is a fort there—"

"I know the spot but too well, Mr. Powell, for my father lies buried on the bank of that stream, and it was there, on the prairie beyond that your brother was captured by the outlaws."

"Then you do know the spot well, Miss Joslyn."

"But the red-skins are on your trail, and will take advantage of your approaching the timber to close in upon you."

"And what do you advise?"

"That I ride on and see if all is clear ahead, and you come on at the pace you are now traveling."

"There I will wait for you, and you and one of your men can ride on, while the rest dismount, you leading their horses."

"Going into the river, the Indians, who will push on rapidly as you near the timber, will think you are all coming to the other shore, and will run right on to our ambush."

"It is a good plan, Mr. Powell, and I leave it in your hands to carry out."

"But are the Indians visible behind us?"

"Yes; I saw them with my glass just before you joined me."

"Now I will ride on," and Night Hawk gave the rein to Flyer, who went off at the same sweeping pace he had gone in getting ahead of Janette and her cowboys.

The scout approached the timber with extreme caution, until convinced that there was no enemy concealed in its shadows, and then he rode boldly through it.

Having reconnoitered to his satisfaction he selected the spot for the ambush, which was at the bank, where the trail descended to the river.

He also selected a position on each side for a couple of cowboys to stand, so as to catch the Indians between four fires, for he intended to follow them when they entered the timber.

Soon after Janette and the negroes rode up and Night Hawk made known his plan of action.

To give every rifle a chance the young girl offered to lead the horses across herself, and they were accordingly tied together with lariats, and she took the lead.

Night Hawk then placed two negroes on each side of the trail, and in such a way that they would not fire toward each other, and the balance were ranged along under the bank, the latter serving as a breastwork.

A cowboy, left to watch the red-skins, now came running up with the word that they were pressing on rapidly, and but a short distance off, and Janette rode down to the river with her string of horses, while Night Hawk glided back into the timber to follow the Indians until they were in the trap, and then his shot was to be the signal for all to fire.

The scout had barely reached a hiding-place in the edge of the timber when the red-skins dashed up.

They evidently suspected no enemy near,

unless the party they trailed had halted in the timber for the night; but they came to a stand-still and listened in deep silence.

The splashing of water reached their ears, and they gave a grunt of satisfaction and urged their ponies on.

Like grim phantoms they rode through the timber, not one of them seeing the dark form gliding from tree to tree behind them, and keeping pace with their gait.

Before them suddenly gleamed the moonlight again, and a few more rods would bring them to the stream.

Again they halted and listened. There was no splashing in the water now, and once more they pushed on.

But suddenly the dark woods were illuminated by a red flash, a sharp report rung out, and a warrior dropped dead from his pony, while his comrades rushed madly toward the river, for the spot had come from behind them.

But in their front burst forth a glare of fire, then on their left, then on their right, and again in their rear, until, with mad yells of fear, the red-skins wheeled as one man and dashed away through the timber, back the way they had come.

But as one warrior was rushing by, a strong arm suddenly seized his bridle-rein, and the iron grip threw the pony he rode to the ground, while his red rider was dashed heavily against a tree.

Holding on to the frightened pony, Night Hawk quietly walked up to the fallen red-skin and bent over him.

"I thought so, when I heard his head strike the tree with such a crack."

"Well, it saved me killing him, and I am always glad to escape red work when I can; but what a scare we gave them, and fully half of them went down."

"I will go and join those gallant black bravos, and then we'll hasten on after that plucky girl."

So saying, Night Hawk sprang on the back of the captured pony, and signaling his coming by a call, soon dashed up to Zip and his comrades, whom he found "countin' noses, ter see ef they'd go round one apiece," as one of the negroes remarked.

"Not as many as that, Zip, but you did well, and I see have caught three ponies, so I'll push on after Miss Janette, and bring you back your horses."

"She am comin' back now, sah," said one of the cowboys, who had been looking across the river.

"Yes, and she comes as though there was danger behind her—Ha! there is danger," and Night Hawk sprang again upon the Indian pony and spurred into the stream, followed by Zip and two others of the cowboys upon the three captives they had made.

CHAPTER XLIV.

NIGHT HAWK SETS A TRAP.

"INDIANS are pursuing me!" cried Janette, as she came dashing toward the scout, meeting him midway of the stream and sending showers of spray over him from the splashing hoofs of the horses.

"Do not be alarmed, for we can hold our own," said George Powell, wheeling about, and riding by her side, while Janette went on to say that she had discovered a party of horsemen about the same moment that they saw her and started in pursuit, for she instantly retreated to recross the river.

As they reached the other shore Night Hawk said quickly:

"Now you keep on at a gallop through the timber, and they, hearing you, will believe you still in flight, and we can repeat our ambush act very cleverly."

"Oh, what a life this is to lead," muttered Janette, as she obeyed the injunction of the scout, while the cowboys, excepting two who went with her, ranged themselves along on the bank for a surprise to the pursuers.

In obedience to the command of Night Hawk, the two negroes with Janette shouted and called out, as though they were hastily driving cattle in a retreat, which would leave the Indians to believe that they would capture a bonanza.

But the red-skins were a trifle cautious, and arriving upon the opposite shore, came to a halt.

"They seem to git skeert ob a trap, sah, an' won't come across," said Zip.

Night Hawk made no immediate reply, for he was searching with his glass up and down the river-bank.

At last he said:

"Wait here, Zip, you and your boys, while I meet that fellow who is crossing the river above."

"Well, Massa Night Hawk, yer does know a Ingun fer all he is wu'th."

"Now, who'd 'a' thought o' thinkin' the Injuns was goin' to let a warrior swim across ther river?" and Zip and his comrades were lost in admiration of the cunning of the scout, that overmatched that of the red-skins.

Walking swiftly up the stream, Night Hawk took a stand on the bank in the shelter of a little thicket, and waited, while the cowboys with their attention attracted to the Indian, could see his dark head crossing the river rapidly.

Watching, they saw him land and hastily run to the shelter of the timber.

Unfortunately for that red-skin, he ran right into a pair of powerful arms, that grasped him with a grip like death.

There was a struggle of a few seconds, and one of the two dropped his length upon the ground, while the other walked swiftly back to the trail leading to the ford.

"Didn't you see him, sah? for he done cross ober," said Zip, as the scout came up to him.

"Oh, yes, Zip. I was there to welcome him," was the significant reply, and the cowboys saw that the scout was coolly rubbing the blade of his knife.

The shouting of the two men, and tramping of the horses were now heard far away, so that Night Hawk gave a long, loud cry, which startled the cowboys, while he instantly said a few words in a tongue unknown to them.

"Golly! Massa Night Hawk, is you callin' de red niggers ober?"

"Yes, Zip, and I am doing so in their own language, which will lead them to believe that their comrade is safe."

"Yes, massa, he am safe fer wolf-meat; but dere dey come, sah."

"Yes, and we have about two to one against us, but we will give them a surprise that will make things even."

"Now get ready to fire, and you, Bob, as soon as they turn back, jump on that pony there, and ride after Miss Janette and bring her back."

"Now, boys, fire when I give the word, and each of you pick out your man, but don't hurt the ponies."

A moment of silence followed on the shore while the Indian horsemen came splashing across the stream, anxious to overtake those they were in pursuit of.

Having seen a number of riderless horses, and only one person mounted, the red-skins evidently suspected that they had a picnic, and would catch a few whites with a drove of ponies and cattle.

As they reached pistol-range, Night Hawk said, quietly:

"Now, boys, there is your game, so bag it."

"Fire!"

Above the rattle of the rifles rung out the wild war-cry of the scout, and, with several of their number slain, others wounded, and panic-struck at the surprise, the red-skins wheeled and darted back for the other shore.

"Push them, you boys who have horses," cried Night Hawk, and with four of the black cowboys following him he dashed down the bank into the stream.

There were no trees on the other shore, no shelter, and without pausing the Indians went flying away across the prairie, while the scout and his followers coolly proceeded to catch four ponies that had lost their riders.

Remaining on that shore, Night Hawk sent Zip back after Janette, and soon the whole party were united and pushing on at a swift gait for the Prairie Rest Ranch, the scout now taking the lead with the maiden by his side.

CHAPTER XLV.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

As they rode along together, side by side, Zip and his comrades following behind, Janette said to Night Hawk, breaking a silence that had lasted for some time:

"Mr. Powell, you have saved my life, and such a debt of gratitude I can never fully repay."

"My dear young lady, I have, in serving you, but been doing my duty, I assure you, and aiding the Government to get rid of a few troublesome red-skins, whom I am paid to destroy."

"You make light of it, sir; but it is a serious matter, to me, to owe my life to any one, and within only a few hours, I may say, both you and your brother have saved me from death, ay, worse than death, and Major Monkton has done the same."

"You have been unfortunate in getting into a groove of ill-fortune, Miss Janette, and both my brother and myself, and Major Monkton, too, have been most fortunate in being able to serve you."

"You will not believe that you have done a great deed, in spite of all I say."

"Yes, it is certainly a good deed to save a human life, and especially the life of a woman; but let us ride a little faster, for I have half an idea that Major Monkton may need our aid, as Wolf Fang seems to have divided his warriors into a dozen different parties, for we have met two of them already."

"Yes, and a third may attack the ranch, you fear?"

"Such might be the case."

"Then our aid is needed there."

"If they are in heavy force, for the major has not a full force now, with these boys absent; but he has made such good fights on several occasions that the red-skins let him alone of late."

"Then let us hasten; come boys, Mr. Powell thinks the Indians may visit your master's ranch," cried Janette, and away the party dashed at a rapid gallop, the captured ponies being led after them.

Again, as they rode along, a silence fell between them for some little time, and was once more broken by Janette.

"Mr. Powell," she said.

"What of your brother?"

"The Doctor?"

"Yes, for have you another?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Janette, and a dashing boy he is, with long curling hair black as night, blue eyes, and a face as handsome as a girl's."

"In fact he has made a handsome-looking woman when dressed up and attending a Mexican fandango, where he had half the Greasers quarreling for a dance with him, and has then had to fight them in his petticoats, when he made known the joke," and Night Hawk laughed at the remembrance as gayly as though he had not a care upon his mind.

Looking into the dark, clear-cut, handsome countenance of George Powell, and remembering the Doctor Scout's handsome face, Janette could not but think aloud:

"You and your brothers are three very handsome and remarkable men, Mr. Powell."

"Thank you, Miss Janette; but if you like the looks of Frank and myself, just wait until you see Billy Blue Eyes."

"And who is that?"

"My third brother."

"His name is William, then?"

"Yes, in the family Bible, Miss Janette; but we call him Will, and he bears the names of Blue-Eyed Billy, Wild Will Powell, and Broncho Bill."

"You know a man has as many names on the border as an English nobleman, or French count; but you must fall in love with Billy, for I know he will with you, and I'd like the best in the world to have you for a sister."

For the first time in days Janette laughed—a ringing, silvery laugh, and said:

"You give me fair warning, Mr. Powell; but I am already your sister, for your brother adopted me as such."

"And Billy will adopt you as—but never mind, he'll be here soon, and you will see him."

"Where is he now?" asked Janette, interested in Blue-Eyed Billy.

"He has a ranch a little over a hundred miles south from here, where he lives with our mother."

"He did live in Texas, where he was a ranger, scout and ranchero, but moved up here to be near Frank and myself."

"He will be here soon, you say?"

"I sent, by the messenger who went after the relief for Captain Burt, to ask one of my

scouts at the fort to go after Bill and have him come here at once."

"Oh! I feel that you mean to rescue your noble brother, the Doctor."

"That is just why I sent after Will, Miss Janette, to attempt Frank's rescue."

"I feel that you will be successful, and, if you will have any faith in what I can do, command me, for I am heart and soul now a prairie girl, and shall devote my life to—no! no! no! I will not say that, for I nearly said *revenge*; but certainly I have a higher aim in life than that, though, when I think of the fate of my poor father, and what may happen to your brother, I feel so full of hate toward those wretches I think I could be merciless, oh, so merciless to them all."

Seeing that the conversation had run into a painful subject, Night Hawk changed it with the remark:

"I am glad you decided to remain with Major Monkton, rather than go to live at the fort, for I think you will like it better there, though at first it may seem lonely—Hark!"

All drew rein suddenly, and the sound of distant firing was heard.

"They are attacking the ranch."

"Come on and ride hard!" shouted Night Hawk, and at full speed the horses were urged forward across the moonlit prairie.

A ride of fifteen minutes brought them over a rise that showed them the distant ranch, and now and then from its stockade walls a flash could be seen.

Getting nearer, they saw a dark mass of men and horses, which they knew to be Indians, and they had started on a charge for the ranch.

"Quick, Zip! your bugle!" cried the scout, and seizing it, he blew a ringing cavalry charge.

Then with a cheer they rode rapidly forward, firing as they dashed along, while those in the ranch opening at the same time, placed the red-skin band between two fires, that quickly sent them flying away in terror, while Janette and the cowboys dashed on into the stockade through the gate opened for them by Major Monkton, who, although still suffering from his wounds, was at the head of the colored defenders of their prairie home.

As Janette sprung to the ground and was warmly welcomed by the major, who told her that she had saved the ranch, she cried:

"I am not the one who deserves the credit Major Monkton, but Mr. Powell here, the chief of scouts at the fort."

"Ah! where is he?"

"Powell, where are you, my boy?" called out the major.

But no response came from Night Hawk, and all looked around for him in vain.

He had not been seen, Zip said, since he gave the order to ride for the gates with all haste.

As the Indians, who were not in large force, had kept on in rapid retreat, Zip and several of the men went out on the prairie in search of the scout.

But their search was fruitless, for nowhere was Night Hawk to be found.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CAMP IN THE CANYON.

THE scene changed from the rolling prairies to a wild but beautiful spot in the hills, where flowers are growing in the vales, streamlets murmuring as they swiftly dash along, and birds are making the forest ring with their shrill songs.

In a small canyon a camp is visible, and fires from which the smoke curls lazily upward are to be seen before each door of half a dozen rude shanties that are built under the shelter of the steep hillside.

Horses are staked out here and there in the valley, feeding upon the juicy grass, and saddles, bridles and pack-saddles hang ready for use in the trees near by.

It is a picturesque scene, yet a wild one, and there is every indication that the camp has not been pitched for a day.

Afar off, fully a league distant, is a high eminence, rising like a sugar-loaf out of a level plain, with the rolling prairie beyond and the range of hill-land behind it.

Its summit is bare of vegetation, and it is a desolate spot for one to seek; but standing there, relieved against the sky, is a man, looking statue-like in his stillness.

Under the brow of the hill, and a few

paces only from the man, is a horse, saddled and bridled.

This man is in plain view of the canyon, wherein is the camp, and it is evident that he is the sentinel, watching there for the approach of any foe.

In the camp are a score or more of men, idly lolling about upon the grass, sleeping, smoking, or playing cards, while coming down the hillside are several more on horseback, their animals loaded with game.

Before one of the shanties, standing apart from the others, and more pretentious, are two persons, one of them reclining upon the ground, the other supported in a half-sitting posture upon a stretcher that had evidently been brought out of the hut.

Both these persons the reader has seen before, for one was the Doctor Scout, the other the Red Angel chief, his face still concealed by the mask of red wings.

Some weeks have passed away since the outlaw captain became the patient of the Doctor Scout, and in all that time the Surgeon Scout had not seen the face of the wounded man, other than the long blonde mustache and firm chin.

What attentions, other than surgical, the chief needed, Brick, the black bravo, attended to, giving him his meals, and caring for him as tenderly as though he were an infant.

"And you pronounce me out of danger, Powell?" asked the chief, as the two were together under the shanty.

"Wholly so."

"And Dead Knife Jim, is he out of danger?"

"Yes."

"And no longer needs care?"

"Only such as his comrades can give him, for his arm is healing rapidly."

"And Lucky Luke?"

"Is likewise doing well."

"And Sandy?"

"Was up this morning, while the lesser wounded of the men are up and about."

"You have then done your duty, you think?"

"To such an extent that I have sinned against my Government and my conscience in nursing back to sinful lives a set of villains that deserve hanging," was the very cool response of Frank Powell.

The chief bit his lips, and asked:

"Well, what do you expect of me?"

"To release me."

"Upon what terms?"

"What terms do you ask?"

"That you take a solemn oath not to again take the trail of the Red Angels."

"If such are your terms, just set yourself right on the matter, for I shall take no such oath."

"Will you swear not to bring any force of men against us, or give information that will lead your soldiers to find us?"

"Yes, I will swear to keep the secret of your retreat here, and not to march against you with any force, or to make known facts that may lead to your being tracked down."

"But I will pledge you also that I will remain your foe, and when I can personally track you, kill you, or do you or your band harm, I will do so with my whole soul in the good work."

"You are frank."

"Yes, my name is Frank, and you should know me well enough to understand that my words fit my name."

"I do, for a more fearless man I never met in word or act."

"Thank you; I am sorry I do not know something good of you that I can return the compliment by flattery."

"So you demand your release?"

"I do."

"Then I shall consult my men to-night after the feast, for I see the hunters have brought home a fine assortment of game."

"I thought that you were chief?"

"I am."

"Then why consult your men?"

"To see if any of them object."

"And if they do?"

"We'll decide then what is to be done."

Frank Powell said no more, but rising, strolled about the camp, looking at the game the hunters had brought in.

As he passed near the chief again, the latter called out:

"When does your parole end, Powell?"

"I told you that I would make no effort to escape until I reported that you and your wounded men were in a safe condition for me to leave them."

"And you assert now that they are?"

"I do."

"Then you consider your parole at an end?"

"I do."

"And may attempt to escape at any moment?"

"No, I shall wait until after your men have given you permission to let me go," answered the Surgeon Scout, as he turned on his heel and walked off.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE DUEL FOR LIBERTY.

THE outlaws' feast was a picturesque scene though a wild one, for the lurid glare of the camp-fires sent huge shadows of men, horses and trees dancing against the sides of the hills, while voices in song, in profanity and coarse jests were heard upon all sides.

A cask of rum had been opened by the chief, in honor of the Surgeon Scout's report that the wounded were out of danger, and the rough, desperate men were drinking deep and adding the stimulant of liquor to their own reckless natures.

Frank Powell was no liquor-loving man, and sat calmly by, viewing the wild scene and wondering how it all would end.

The chief had been bolstered up on his stretcher, the other wounded had been brought to the large camp-fire, and Dead Knife Jim was seated near Powell, grim and silent.

When the feasting was over and the desperate band were excited with their drinking the chief ordered silence.

Instantly all was attention, and Captain Kit said, in a voice that had grown strong once more, and had the old-time ring to it:

"Men, there is one in our midst who, as you all know, does not belong to our band."

A number of voices shouted:

"That's so!"

"I refer to the Wizard Doctor."

"We all know him, an' he are a Wizard Doctor," said one.

"I admit his magical skill as a surgeon, men, I admit his marvelous deeds as a man, his desperate courage, deadly aim, and all that; but he is our foe, and though he has brought me and others back to life, is he entitled to go?"

"I put the question squarely to you all."

"Is the Wizard Doctor to be permitted to go free and again become our deadly foe?"

A silence fell upon all for an instant, and then Dead Knife Jim said:

"If the Doc gives his word as how he won't do no harm ag'in' us, I says let him go, fer he are ther man clean through ter keep ther word."

"I says so, too."

"Dead Knife talks serene!"

"Thet's ther music!"

"Ther Doc can't tell a lie ef he tried."

"Let him go!"

"Yas, he's squar'!"

"He's Gospel on ther truth, pards."

Such were the cries that followed the words of Dead Knife Jim, with many more.

Then the chief said:

"As the opinion of all seems to be to let the Doctor go free, I will administer to him an oath that he will not lead a force against us, will not betray our haunts, our strength of numbers, or tell any secrets about us, and if he takes this oath, he can go."

"Thet's ther music!" shouted a voice.

"Remember, men, this does not bind me not to single-handed hunt you down and kill you wherever I find you," came in Powell's quiet tones.

"Wal, thet are narve," said one.

"True, it gives you the right to hunt us as you can, singly, but not to betray us, or march against us with any force."

"I understand you then, Captain Hyena, and am willing to take such oath."

"Then there is no dissenting voice?" asked the chief.

"Yes!"

All turned upon the speaker. It was Van, the outlaw.

"You object, do you, Van?"

"I do."

"You are the only one."

"And the rules of our band gives me the right to object."

"Yes."

"I demand the execution of that man, whom I am almost superstitious enough to believe is allied with the devil!" savagely said the outlaw.

"I have been allied to a number of devils of late," coolly put in Powell.

"Why do you demand his execution, Van?" asked Captain Kit.

"Because he has tracked us like a hound: he has the death of several of our number to answer for—"

"I have a greater crime to answer for in saving the lives of your chief and others," fearlessly put in the Surgeon Scout, and his bold remark really won for him the greater admiration of many present.

"See, he regrets saving your life and the lives of Dead Knife and others," continued Van, and he went on rapidly and with savage earnestness:

"He has wronged us, hunted us, killed us, and will do so again, and wipe us out from the prairie, for he will never keep an oath if he makes it on a Bible, if we had one in camp to swear him on."

"I hes got a Bible," said Dead Knife Jim, putting his only hand into an inner pocket and drawing forth—a pack of cards!

All broke forth in a loud laugh at this; but not in the least disturbed, Dead Knife Jim again thrust his hand into his pocket and this time drew out a small Bible, while he said:

"It were in comp'ny along with ther keards, same es thet good man are in ther comp'ny o' us, thet are a durned sight wuss nor any old greasy pack o' keards thet hev ever gambled a life away."

"Lordy! Dead Knife are goin' ter take ter preachin', now he hev lost one o' his grips," said Lucky Luke.

"You is a howlin' liar, Luke, fer I are only talkin' sense, an' ef yer think 'cause I hev lost one grip that I hain't got another, jest let me feel yer windpipe an' see ef I don't turn off the gas."

But Lucky Luke concluded that he'd lose his name for luck if he allowed Dead Knife to try the experiment, and remained silent, while Van, the outlaw, said in a loud voice:

"You have heard my demand, men, and speak up and tell the chief I am right."

But not a voice was heard in response, and an unpleasant silence followed, which was broken by the mellow-toned voice of the Surgeon Scout saying:

"As you seem so anxious that I should die, sir, suppose you take upon yourself the part of executioner, and face me with a revolver at ten paces?"

A perfect yell greeted this proposition, and Van, the outlaw, saw that he had made a mistake, while he was the more convinced of it by the remark of his chief:

"Yes, Van, that settles the puzzle as to what we are to do with the Wizard Doctor, and you must face him."

Again a yell of delight broke from the men, for they were just in the humor to wish to witness some tragic scene; and the distance was quickly stepped off by Old Joe, the back of each man to be toward a fire, upon which fresh logs were thrown to add light to the affair.

Doctor Powell calmly prepared for the meeting, his revolver being handed him by Brick, at the chief's orders, for in the camp he had been forced to go unarmed.

"The weepin all right, massa—loaded jist as I got him," said the negro.

Frank Powell smiled, and leveling the weapon at a mark on the tree, rattled off the six shots.

"There were no bullets in that revolver, Brick, for see, there is no mark on that tree."

"Massa miss de tree, maybe," said Brick, innocently.

Powell made no response until he had loaded the weapon, and then he said, turning quickly toward the negro:

"You think so, do you, Brick, that I missed the tree?"

"Yas, massa."

"All right; I'll convince you to the contrary."

"There, place your hand *there*," and seizing the large hand of the negro, he flattened

it out against the tree, in spite of the effort to prevent it on Brick's part.

Then covering the head of the negro with his revolver, he said sternly:

"Hold it there as it is, or I'll kill you!"

The frightened black obeyed in terror, while all looked on with real gusto, the chief remarking:

"If you harm that negro, Powell, your life won't be worth a cent in my camp."

Frank Powell smiled, raised his revolver quickly, and four shots flashed forth, a wild yell greeting them, as the men rushed forward to find that a bullet had buried itself in the space between each one of the negro's fingers, without nipping the flesh.

"You have doubtless changed your mind, Brick, about my missing the tree," remarked the Surgeon Scout, in an off-hand way.

"Yas, sah, I change my mind forebermore, massa," and Brick grinned all over his face at his fortunate escape.

During this scene Van, the outlaw, had stood with his revolver in his hand, and he would gladly have shot the Doctor; but he saw the eye of Dead Knife Jim upon him, and the latter had his weapon in his hand, so he was forced to take the chances of a meeting with the Doctor, though the exhibition he had had of his skill did not reassure him of his success.

"I am ready," said Surgeon Powell, pleasantly, as he took the stand that the chief indicated.

Sullenly Van took his stand, and the word was given by Captain Hyena, while the Red Angels ranged themselves in two rows on either side of the combatants.

Both were told to stand with their backs to each other, and at the word to wheel and fire, until they emptied their revolvers.

Frank Powell stood with an air of utter indifference, while the outlaw seemed ill at ease.

Their weapons were in their belts, and they were to stand with folded arms until the word.

Such were the arrangements.

Raising himself upon his elbow Captain Kit cried:

"Fire!"

Almost with the word, so quick were the movements of Doctor Powell, came the flash of his pistol, and Van, the outlaw, fell dead before he got his revolver to a level, the clutch of his finger upon the trigger discharging the weapon, and the bullet burying itself in the brain of one of the outlaws, who was at the end of the line.

"Two at one shot," cried Old Joe, while Captain Kit said:

"Well Powell, you have won your freedom, and you are at liberty to start in the morning."

"Thank you," was all that the Surgeon Scout said, and he walked off to the shanty which had been his abode in the camp of the Red Angels, while these reckless spirits that had held him prisoner went on with their revel without a thought of their dead comrades.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A FRIEND IN A FOE.

FRANK POWELL had thrown himself down to rest, little recking of the turmoil in the outlaw camp, and was sinking to sleep, when suddenly he awoke with a start.

He was conscious of a human presence near, and said sternly:

"Speak, or I fire!"

"Easy, Pard Doc, easy, fer it are me," came in a whisper.

"Ah! it is you, Dead Knife Jim?"

"Yas, Doc."

"Well, what is it?"

"I wishes ter give yer a leetle advice."

"I am listening."

"Some o' ther boys hes been told ter ambush yer in ther morning."

"Indeed?"

"Yas, ther chief hain't ther best man in ther world, and he wants yer dead, and he hev told five o' ther boys ter lay fer yer at ther Willow Canyon, through which yer hes ter pass, and you is ter be shot through ther heart, so jist go 'round by ther Antelope ford o' ther river, an' leave 'em thar waitin' fer yer until they gits gray-headed."

"I thank you, Dead Knife, most sincerely; but as I know of their little game, I've half a mind to go by the Willow Canyon and stir the assassins up a little."

"Five is a leetle too many, Pard Doc."

"Not if I first get the drop, and take them by surprise."

"Waal, yer weepins is ter be unloaded, tho' they'll look loaded, an' ther ammunition they pretends ter give you is no good."

"Ah, that is bad."

"Yas, but I hes some good ammunition here fer yer, an' I'll go out ter-night afore I goes ter roost, an' leave ther cap'n's repeatin'-rifle in ther holler o' ther tree whar ther trail forks a mile below here, an' you kin git thet weepin'."

"I thank you most kindly, Jim, and some day hope to repay you."

"You hes done thet, an' I'd take nothin' from yer, Doc, fer ef yer is my inemy, I is yer friend."

"Well, Jim, I have much to feel gratitude to you for, and if you wish to give up this outlaw life you lead, come to me at the fort, and I'll make an honest man of you."

"It would be harder ter thread a needle with a lariat, I guesses; but I'll keep yer offer in my brain-pan."

"If you get caught, any time, I'll try and get the noose from around your neck, Jim."

"Afore it chokes me ter death, Doc?"

"Oh yes."

"Thet are squar', an' I'll say good-by, an' luck ter ver, onless yer shoots at me."

"Here's ther only grip yer hes left me, but it means squar' when it clutches your hand."

Frank Powell grasped the hand of the outlaw, and then lay down again to rest.

But he was up with the dawn, his revolvers were given to him by Brick, with the remark:

"Massa tole me ter done gib you dese, Doctor; but he am sleepin' dis mornin' an' I doesn't wish to disturb him."

"All right, Brick; say to him that some day I hope to meet him again," answered the Surgeon Scout, well knowing that the negro was lying.

Mounting his horse, he rode from the camp, the outlaws who were awake calling out to him:

"Good-by, Doc, an' don't let us catch yer ag'in."

The bodies of Van and his brother outlaw still lay where they had fallen, and the Doctor cast a glance at them as he rode by.

At the spot where the trails divided he found the hollow tree, and in it the rifle which the faithful Dead Knife Jim had placed there.

Not wishing to go further with no loads in his revolvers, he examined them and saw that they had *no powder in the cartridges*.

He soon had them loaded, however, and his horse feeling anxious to go, he gave him the rein, heading straight for the Willow Canyon, in spite of the warning he had received from Dead Knife Jim.

But there was a stern look upon his face, and a dangerous twinkle in his handsome black eyes, as though he was anxious to meet the ambushed assassins, and leave his mark upon them.

CHAPTER XLIX.

WELL MET.

As Frank Powell rode along, disdaining to desert the trail through Willow Canyon because he knew that deadly peril lay there in his path, all the venom of his nature was aroused against those who had plotted his death.

They were fearful odds against him, he knew; but he was not one to count odds.

They were murderers, renegades, and intended to shoot him down like a dog, so that he intended to plot to circumvent them, and make them the sufferers.

He was well mounted, thoroughly armed, and had confidence in himself, which were big odds in his favor.

They expected to take him by surprise, and he would turn the tables upon them, and thus hold another advantage.

Arriving near the Willow Canyon, he wheeled abruptly to the left, and was about to make a flank movement by riding to the base of the hills, then leave his horse, go on foot over the ridge which the canyon severed in twain, and coming up in the rear of the outlaws, thus meet them.

He had gone but a short distance when he heard the clatter of hoofs.

Instantly he drew his horse into a thicket, and watched for coming events.

The clatter of the hoofs grew louder and louder, which proved that the horses were coming toward him, for there were several animals that made the sound.

He had not long to wait, when coming up the trail he beheld three horsemen riding at full speed, and yet urging their horses on with spur and voice.

A glance showed him that he knew them.

They belonged to the band of Red Angel outlaws, and were without doubt the men who were sent to take his life.

But where were the other two, for Dead Knife Jim had told him that there were five in the party of assassins?

He could have dropped one or more of them as they ran, but he would not fire from an ambush upon them.

That they were alarmed greatly was evident.

But what had so frightened them?

Had the major at the fort sent a force to his rescue, and had his brother George tracked the outlaws to their lair in the hills?

It might be so; but at any rate, Frank Powell, with all these thoughts flashing through his mind, decided to ride on and investigate for himself.

He therefore waited in his shelter until the outlaws dashed on out of sight, and then he rode on his way straight for the Willow Canyon.

Soon the steep walls of earth rose before him, with the stream running through them, its banks bordered with willows, and he paused, for again the sound of approaching hoofs reached his ears.

The clatter was echoed back from the canyon walls, resounding like the tramp of a hundred horses, and Frank Powell cried:

"Troopers, as I live, for those hoofs are shod to give back that ringing sound, and consequently they are not Indians."

Listening still, he added:

"No, there are but two horses, and the echo makes them seem to be more."

"I have nothing to fear from two men, so shall wait."

A few moments more and those he waited so coolly for dashed into sight.

They were riding hard, and yet their eyes fell upon Frank Powell as soon as he saw them.

Instantly they drew rein, dragging their horses back upon their haunches for an instant.

Then from the lips of the three men broke exclamations, and spurring forward quickly, they sprung from their horses, and each of the two grasped a hand of the Surgeon Scout.

Had the reader seen those three men, as they stood there with clasped hands, he would have pronounced them a noble trio.

Both of those who had so suddenly come up were men of fine bearing, the one tall, slender, wiry, straight as an arrow, with dark, expressive eyes, mild in repose, and full of fire in excitement.

His movements were full of quiet grace, though quick, and with his jet-black hair hanging far down his back, his buckskin suit, and broad-brimmed slouch hat, he was one to attract attention in any throng.

His companion was hardly more than the average height of man, with a form that was perfect, and indicative of power and activity in a remarkable degree; he was clad also in a hunting-suit of buckskin, and showed that he was a thorough borderman, at home in the dress.

His face was perfect in feature, and strikingly handsome; so handsome, in fact, with its dark-blue eyes, and his long waving hair, black as night, he might have passed for a beautiful brunette maiden in disguise were it not that the stamp of manhood, and all it implies, was impressed upon his features, to give the lie to effeminacy, that a first glance at him might suggest.

Both men were well mounted, armed with rifles, a belt of arms, and a lariat, and the reader having met the taller one before, as Night Hawk Powell, the fort scout, I may as well introduce his companion as Broncho Bill, in other words, William Powell,* the youngest brother of the Surgeon Scout.

* Both George and William Powell are now physicians and surgeons, practicing medicine in Wisconsin.—THE AUTHOR.

After the first greeting was over between the brothers, Frank Powell asked, in his kindly way:

"Well, boys, you are here in search of me, I know."

"That is it, Frank, and we have found you, or you found us, I don't know which; but you look healthy for an outlaw's captive," said Broncho Bill, with a light laugh.

"Oh, yes, I am in perfect health; but it will be nothing to boast of if we do not ride on, for we will have the whole band of Red Angels at our heels in a couple of hours."

"Minus two we left back in the canyon."

"Ah! you ran upon those fellows, then?"

"I thought something had started the trio I saw pass me."

"Yes, we ran on them, fired as they saw us, brought down one each, and the others ran as though they thought we had a regiment at our heels, while George and I started to follow, as you see."

"But Flyer trod in a hole and threw George, and when I picked him up we concluded to let the fellows go, examine our game, catch their two horses, and then come on."

"We hitched the horses back there in the canyon, and here we are."

"And right glad am I to see you, Will; but where is mother?"

"On the ranch, Frank, for I left her there when I came at the tocsin sounded by George to strike your trail."

"And you struck it?" said Frank Powell, with a smile.

"Yes, we struck it rich, and now what have you to say for yourself, Frank?"

In his quiet way, as they rode along, the Surgeon Scout told his brothers of what had occurred in the camp of the Red Angels, even to his being bound by oath not to lead a force against them.

Coming to the horses of the outlaws, they took them in lead, passing the bodies of their dead riders with merely a glance, while Frank Powell, recognizing them, made known their names with the remark:

"Lucky Luke's had a turn of luck this time, and Old Joe never lived to die at the end of a rope, as I predicted he would."

"Now, boys, we will push on rapidly, for we don't wish to be crowded; so, ho for the fort."

"All right, Frank; but as we can make it on our way to go by old Major Monkton's ranch, let us do so, for it is a duty you owe to relieve the mind of that pretty girl about you, or she'll be coming up here with all of the old man's darkies at her back to rescue you."

Frank Powell's face flushed, but he simply said:

"Well, to Monkton's ranch be it, then!"

CHAPTER L.

BRONCHO BILL ON THE TRAIL.

MAJOR MONKTON had recovered from the wounds he had received in his brush with the Sioux, and had come to bless the day when Janette came to his prairie home, for he found her all that he could wish a daughter to be.

He had been most anxious regarding her long stay, and was about to start with his remaining force of cowboys in search of her when she so opportunely appeared and came to his aid, the charge of the gallant little party putting the Indians to instant flight.

The mysterious disappearance of Night Hawk Powell, had worried both Janette and the major greatly, and when they found all search fruitless, the maiden decided to at once return to the soldiers' camp and report the disappearance of the scout, and her belief that he had fallen into the hands of the red-skins.

She found Zip and his comrades most willing to accompany her, and, mounting fresh ponies, they set out, retracing their way without accident or adventure, and arriving at the bivouac on the river just as Captain Burt was sitting down to breakfast.

Janette was most warmly welcomed, and her story of Night Hawk's brave work, and his mysterious disappearance, listened to with the deepest attention.

"I will order what men can be spared in chase at once, Miss Joslyn, and when the relief comes send as many more as I can, for we must not lose that splendid fellow, Night Hawk, and if harm does befall him and his

brother, our surgeon, a most fearful vengeance shall be visited upon Indians and outlaws all along this border.

Shortly after breakfast, and Janette really enjoyed the meal, the sentinel reported horsemen in sight, and half an hour after up dashed a young officer and twenty troopers.

"Ho, Lieutenant Clark, I am glad to see you," cried the captain, as the young officer threw himself from his horse, and started with admiration when his eyes fell upon Janette, while he answered:

"God knows, captain, I am glad to find you all safe, for I had grave doubts on the subject, after what your courier reported, and I pushed on hard, leaving the ambulances under a guard to follow."

"And did a company go northward after the red-skins, Clark?"

"Yes, sir, Captain Taylor started on their trail."

"I pray they may catch them, for old Wolf Fang divided his force into a dozen bands, and one of these attacked Monkton's ranch and captured Night Hawk Powell, the scout."

"Ah! that is bad, and especially when I learn that his gallant brother, Surgeon Frank, is a prisoner to the Red Angels."

"Yes, Clark, we have been hard hit by both outlaws and Indians, and we must hit back; but let me present you to Miss Joslyn, a fair stranger on the prairie, whom we will adopt as a Daughter of our Regiment."

"The courier also spoke of Miss Joslyn, and it gives me pleasure to lay claim as one of the regimental fathers, to so fair a daughter," said the gallant young officer, and then he volunteered to start, as soon as his men had breakfasted, in pursuit of the band that had captured Night Hawk Powell, for all knew to attempt the rescue of the surgeon from the outlaws would be to sign his death-warrant.

As Lieutenant Clark thought it best to trail the band directly from the ranch, he started for the major's congratulating himself on his happiness in being able to act as an escort to Janette.

The ranch was reached in time for dinner, and then the hard-riden horses were given up for the hardy ponies the major furnished the lieutenant and his troopers, and taking the trail they pushed swiftly on.

It was days before they returned, and then they brought the news that they had trailed the Indians far on their way to their village, and not overtaking them, dared not go further with so small a force, so turned back.

But they had captured an Indian who was ill and dying, and, having wandered away from his comrades, had been left by them, and he had told them that the white scout had dashed forward in the charge at the ranch, hoping to capture Wolf Fang, or kill him, as he recognized that chief, and his horse had rushed right into the midst of a dozen foes, and Night Hawk had been taken captive, though he fought like a demon.

This was proof that the scout was in the clutches of the red-skins, and what would be his fate all could readily understand who knew what the merciless cruelty of the Indians was.

With this additional cause of sorrow, the soldiers returned to the fort in gloom, leaving the major and Janette also to feel for the two brave brothers whom they feared they would never again see.

Thus the days passed by at Prairie Rest Ranch, until Janette was startled one day to see a party of cavalry dash up, and in their midst were several ladies.

It was Major Benteen, the gallant commander of the fort, accompanied by several of his officers and their wives, and their mission was to call upon Janette.

After several hours at the hospitable ranch, and a dinner that was most tempting, they took their leave, all charmed with the young and beautiful orphan, and having obtained the promise of the major to bring Janette over to the fort soon to spend a few days, where she could become acquainted with military life on a frontier post.

There was one thing that Major Benteen told her that distressed her deeply, and that was his fear that nothing could be done to rescue or ransom Frank Powell from the outlaws, who had sent him word, by a mail-courier they halted, that they would kill the surgeon if they were followed, and also that he feared Night Hawk had already been put

to death by his red-skin captors, who were too powerful for him to send a force into their country to attack and punish.

"I will not believe that they are dead," said Janette, warmly, as she and the major talked the matter over that night.

"Here am a gemman to see you, sah," said old Uncle Ike, just then entering, and following was a person whom neither the major nor Janette had before met.

He was a striking looking person, and, walking forward, bowed low, while he said in a pleasant way:

"Pardon me for my intrusion, sir, but my name is William Powell, called for short Broncho Bill, and I am on the trail of my brother, Night Hawk George."

Both the major and Janette were on their feet in an instant, the latter murmuring to herself:

"Billy Blue Eyes! His brother did not speak too highly in his praise."

And then Broncho Bill received a warm welcome from both, and while old Auntie Phoebe was preparing supper for the visitor, the major and Janette learned how the handsome young ranchero had gone to the fort in obedience to his brother's call to a brother's rescue, and had found Night Hawk himself in the hands of the red-skins.

Major Benteen knew just what Broncho Bill was, and of his daring services in Texas, and aware that he, if any man, could rescue Night Hawk, he offered him a party of picked men to accompany him.

But Will Powell said he could do better alone, and mounted upon a splendid animal, and leading another, he had departed upon his solitary trail, intending to make Monkton Ranch his starting-point.

"And do you mean to say that you will go alone into the Indian country, to attempt to rescue your brother?" asked Janette.

"Oh, yes, for I certainly will not let him die, if I can help it, or go unavenged if they kill him."

"If I get George out, then we will look up Frank."

"Three of a kind, Janette," said the major while Will Powell asked:

"Can you sell me five good ponies, major?"

"I can give you all you wish; but will you not want some of my gallant black cowboys as riders?"

"No, thank you; but it is a long ride to the Indian country, and I may not be able to pick up ponies as I need them, so wish to go with three pair and an extra, for I have two good horses."

The major promised the young ranchero the pick of the drove, and at dawn the following morning Broncho Bill started alone upon his perilous mission, riding one pony, and leading six others.

With prayers for his success and safety, the major and Janette saw him depart, and then the latter remarked sadly:

"I fear that yonder goes the third of that noble trio of brothers to his death."

"I fear it too, Janette; but that man will conquer success if it can be done," was the response of Major Monkton.

CHAPTER LI.

AN ACT THAT WAS NOT DOWN ON A SIOUX PROGRAMME.

NIGHT HAWK, in his charge with Janette and the black cowboys, had suddenly recognized in the moonlight none other than the arch Satan of the Sioux, Wolf Fang, the chief.

Instantly he had boldly decided to "have his hair," and had spurred recklessly into the very midst of a party of warriors, his revolvers rattling, and with a determination to take every risk to accomplish his purpose.

Unfortunately an Indian pony, dashing wildly along without a rider, had struck up against his horse with a force that knocked one of his revolvers from his hand and nearly threw him from his saddle.

It was but an instant that he was thus thrown off his guard, but it was fatal to him, for the red-skins about him threw themselves upon him, and he was dragged away with them in their flight, stunned by blows, and bound as they rode along.

Discovering whom they had captured, and

that he was a foe they all stood in great awe of, Wolf Fang at once decided to push on with his captive, and not make another attack upon the ranch, especially as he feared that soldiers might be following the scout.

As for Night Hawk, he took his capture with a coolness that won the admiration of the Indians.

Speaking their tongue, he taunted them with their flight and their defeat.

They stood his jeers in silence, but promised each other they would enjoy a good time with their captive when they reached their village.

What that "good time" was Night Hawk well knew, for he had seen prisoners tortured, and had no reason to believe that they would neglect any art of torturing him which their devilish natures could invent.

He well knew that he would be placed upon his back upon the ground, lariats tied to his hands and feet, which would be stretched apart, and then fires built upon his breast to eat down into his heart.*

Ill fed, cruelly treated, bound so tightly that the bonds gave him great pain, Night Hawk was hurried on by the Sioux.

But he had a nature that did not repine, a frame to endure, and a courage to meet all that was heaped upon him in abuse, and not once did the red-skins hear a groan or a sigh from his lips.

On the contrary he laughed at them, jeered them as squaw-warriors, and drove them nearly crazy with his taunts.

After days of travel, with little rest at night, the Indians reached their village.

Others of the grand party that had started forth to hunt for scalps, plunder and victory, had come in, and a few more were on the way, so that the village was wild when they heard the news of the defeat of Wolf Fang, their great chief.

Night Hawk being the only pale-face captive, they determined to have a merry time over his death, that would avenge the dead braves lost far away upon the prairie.

Finding their prisoner's limbs so swollen from the tight binding, they determined to nurse him up into good condition for the time of his execution, for they wanted no sick man on their hands, that could not give them a grand entertainment.

So George Powell was put in the care of the medicine chief to doctor up, and he was fed on the fat of the Indian land, which was slim diet in the way of delicacies, to say the least of it.

But he wished to regain his strength, and the full use of his limbs, and so did all he could to promote this end.

One day the medicine-chief informed him that he was going to be put to the test on the morrow, to see what he could do against the noble Sioux braves.

"What am I to do, chief, to prove your warriors are all squaws?" he asked, tauntingly.

"The Night Hawk is fleet of foot, the pale-faces say?"

"Yes, I can get over ground pretty lively when encouraged by anything awful behind me."

"The Night Hawk is to race with a number of our fleetest braves."

"They are to start at one end of the village and run through it, around the Medicine Lodge here, and back to the starting-post."

"Well, what if I beat the fleet-running braves in the race?"

"The Night Hawk is a great white chief."

"And you are a great old villain," said Night Hawk.

"He has won the heart of the Red Flower, the sister of Wolf Fang."

"You don't mean it?"

"The medicine-chief speaks true."

"The first time you ever struck the truth, then."

"The Red Flower wishes to marry the Night Hawk."

"She sends a healthy old sinner to tell me of it."

"The Red Flower can marry only a great chief."

"And I hope she will."

"But she wants the pale-face chief, and asked her brother for him."

"And what did Wolf Fang say?"

"He likes the Night Hawk, for he knows he is a great warrior."

"The liking is not mutual."

"The Wolf Fang says," continued the old medicine-chief, who did not master half of what Night Hawk said, "that if the white chief can beat the fleetest of his young braves in the race, he shall have the Red Flower as his squaw."

"He is very kind; but if I don't beat the runners?"

"The Red Flower will have no love for him."

"Is that all?"

"The Night Hawk will be given to the squaws and papposes to torture to death."

"I'll make a run for the Red Flower, chief," was the reply of Night Hawk, and he at once began to train, by walking up and down the prison tepee to get exercise, not so much to gain a red bride, as to escape the old hags that he knew would worry him like a pack of coyotes would a wounded deer.

The following afternoon Night Hawk was led from the tepee, to find the Indians reveling in anticipated sport.

He was led to the further end of the village, and the Red Flower herself told him of her wish to become his wife, and pointed out the course he was to run, which was over a mile in distance, the turning point being the Medicine Lodge beyond the other tepees, and situated upon a ridge that looked down upon the other Indian town.

The Red Flower was pretty for an Indian, but would have been very homely for a pale-face maiden; but the old hags of squaws were homelier, and their fingers seemed to itch to get hold of the white captive.

There were over a score of runners, tall, gaunt young braves, that looked as though they could run like deer, and Night Hawk, though remarkably fleet of foot, felt the chances greatly against him.

At the word they all bounded away, and, until the white man got limbered up, the red-skins led him; but then he warmed to his work and fairly flew past one after the other of the red-skins until, as they neared the tepee around which they were to turn, only five led him.

Suddenly, as Night Hawk had almost reached the Medicine Lodge, a horseman dashed over the ridge, leading another horse by a lariat.

Then there came a couple of shots, two warriors ahead of Night Hawk dropped dead, and the others, unarmed as they were, turned in wild fright and flight, as Broncho Billy dashed up and shouted:

"Mount this horse, George, while I stir up those fellows with a few shots!"

With a bound Night Hawk was in the empty saddle, and with shouts of triumph the two brothers dashed back over the ridge, leaving the Indians in the village wild with rage, and the braves yelling in their frenzy, as they rushed for their ponies to repel an attack of the whites, whom they believed to be about to rush upon them in large force.

"Will, my noble brother, you have saved me from death, or marriage," cried George Powell, as he rode by the side of his brother and grasped his hand.

"And God knows which is to be the most dreaded, George," laughed Will Powell.

"You will have your joke, Will; but who are with you?"

"These two horses."

"What! you came alone?"

"I have a couple of more good ponies staked out about twenty miles from here, and thirty miles further on there are three more, so I think we can break down any Indian horselflesh that comes in pursuit."

"Will, you planned this well, and Heaven bless you; but it was just like you."

"Yes, and after we get a day's rest at Monkton's Ranch, it must be just like us both to get Frank out of his scrape."

"True, and that is why I sent for you when I got into a trap myself; but yonder come the red-skins."

"Yes, but they'll come a little slow until they see we have no other aid near; but I've got the horselflesh to distance them, and we'll do it."

And Broncho Will's words came true, for the relay of horses were found, staked out as he had left them, and they were thus enabled to drop the Indians rapidly in the race for

life, and reach Monkton Ranch in safety, where, after several days' rest, they both set forth to rescue their brother Frank, and with a result already known to the reader.

CHAPTER LII.

IN LOVE'S FETTERS.

THE welcome of Frank Powell and Night Hawk back to the fort, along with their brother, was a grand one, and certainly the arrival most unexpected, for the soldiers had almost given up hope of seeing the popular surgeon and chief of scouts again at their posts of duty.

Broncho Bill was by no means unknown at the fort, for he had on several occasions visited his brothers there, joining them in their scouts and hunts, and in that way had learned much of the country.

His genial disposition and free and easy manner had made him a favorite with all, and now, having been the rescuer of one brother, and with him gone to the rescue of the other, he became a hero of heroes, and wore his honors lightly.

The adventures of the surgeon, the captivity of the scout, and the perils of Broncho Bill in going to their rescue were told over and over again, and the officers decided to get up an entertainment in their honor, sending out invitations to the bold rancheros who dwelt in that dangerous locality within fifty miles around.

Of course Major Monkton was invited, a party of young officers, with Lieutenant Ames at their head, riding over to Prairie Rest Ranch to deliver the invitation.

The evening of the entertainment rolled round, and the fort was ablaze with light, and the half-score of ladies present found themselves belles amid a hundred gallants.

But Janette, sad-eyed, beautiful, and a heroine, carried off the honors, and won the devoted admiration of all, though it was very evident that the "star of her destiny" was Surgeon Frank Powell, for toward him her manner was more tender and confiding than it was even to Major Monkton, her adopted father.

All noticed this, and predicted that the bewitching girl would win the surgeon's heart, as he had hers, and it caused many real heart-aches among the young officers, who, however, could not but admit that Frank Powell had the prior claim, if any one had.

Some joked George and Will Powell about being cut out by the Doctor, and the former said:

"Oh, you know Frank is a surgeon and knows just where the weak points of a woman's anatomy lie, and he has won her love, and I do not wonder at it, for he's a noble fellow, if a brother does say so, and deserves all the joy he can reap in this world."

As for Will Powell, he laughed lightly and said:

"I am glad Frank has won her, for it will keep me from breaking my heart over the little witch, and she'll be my sister, anyhow."

"I can love harder than a government mule can kick, but I am too well acquainted with myself to marry just now and make a woman wretched; but the girls who marry my brothers will capture bonanzas of solid worth."

And all this time neither Frank Powell or Janette had spoken one word of love, the one to the other; but the heart spoke through the eyes of both, and in that silent confession each seemed happy.

The next day after the entertainment Frank Powell and his brothers went along with Major Monkton and Janette as an extra escort for there were rumors that the Red Angels were again on the rampage, and a train had been attacked by them on the South Platte, its defenders driven off, and robbed.

"I wish, Powell, you and your two brothers would take a little scout around and see what Captain Kit is up to," Major Benteen had said to Frank Powell, and thus it was that the three brothers had gone with the party to Prairie Rest Ranch.

As they came in sight of the ranch there was a large trail discovered, as though a party of horsemen had passed along there under cover of the darkness.

Interested in examining it, the men halted, while Janette said that she would gallop on to the ranch and order supper for their guests.

* A common mode of torturing prisoners among the Sioux.—THE AUTHOR.

As she sprung from her horse, old Auntie Phoebe met her with:

"Lor', missy, I is awful glad ter see yer back, honey."

"And whar is ole massa?" *

"He is coming, Auntie Phoebe, and there are some gentlemen with him for supper."

"I 'clar' ter gracious, honey, I is allers skeert when you an' ole massa goes out, fer dese days dar am death an' disturbance in de land."

"But dere is comp'ny, you says?"

"Yes, and we must have a good supper."

"Who is dey, chile?"

"Doctor Powell and his brothers."

"Waal, dat settles it; dey gits de best dis plantation kin bring forth."

"Here, ole man, stir your rheumatiz j'int's an' git ter work, fer de Doctor an' his bruders is comin', an' you know we allers gits shiny gold from dere han's; Lor' bress 'em, dey shall hab de fat ob de lamb (land Aunt Phoebe meant) an' prenty of milk, but whar is we gwine ter git de honey?"

"Never mind the honey, Aunt Phoebe," laughed Janette.

"Yas, chile; you means you'll be dere honey; waal, I guesses you am honey enough, but, Lordy, chile, I fergits ter tell yer some tidin's o' news."

"Why, what is it, Aunt Phoebe, for you seem really excited over it?"

"Am 'cited ober it, chile, an' massa will be, too."

"Oh! has anything gone wrong?" asked Janette.

"Oh, no, chile, on'y dere were a visitor here dis mornin' yarly."

"A visitor?"

"Yas, chile, a gemman."

"A gentleman?"

"Yas, he look dat way, an' he 'habe dat way, for he done gib de ole man a silver dollar, an' he gib me two ob 'em, at de same time sayin' I bein' de better half, I oughter hab de better half, an' I 'grees wid him."

"But who was he, Aunt Phoebe?"

"Waal, he am Missy Ellen's chile!"

"And who was Miss Ellen?"

"Massa's sister."

"Ah!"

"Yas, she marry a rich gemman an' he take her 'way off Norf ter lib, and she hab one chile, a boy, dat we never seen, but massa see him when he were liddle pickaninny."

"After Miss Ellen die, massa an' her husband never meet, for dey was not good friends partic'lar, and now de boy come here to-day an' tell me his father is dead, too, an' he is goin' to hab a ranch up de riber, an' he gone dere with cowboys, wagons, horses an' cattle."

"Indeed, I am glad we are to have a neighbor; but is he a boy, you say?"

"No, chile, he am grown-up man, an' awful pretty, for he tall, straight like a Injun, an' hab a pleasant smile dat fa'rly tickle yer inter laughin' when he look at yer."

"Den he am so perlite, an' tells me ter say ter massa dat he will see him again soon."

Ere Phoebe could say more, the major and his guests arrived, and told Janette that they had discovered another trail, where wagons and cattle had gone along.

In a few words she told him what Phoebe had said about the nephew, and the major seemed to be really pleased, and said:

"I am glad the boy has come here to live."

"He was a fine, manly little fellow, and I had wholly lost sight of him."

"He resembled his father greatly, and if he has grown up to be half as handsome a man, you will have cause to be jealous of him, Doctor," and the major cast a sly look at Janette, who hastily ran out of the room, on some excuse, an act that was pretty sure proof that she was in love's fetters, whatever Frank Powell might feel toward her.

CHAPTER LIII.

A STRANGE MEETING.

A STRANGE calm seemed suddenly to have fallen upon the border, for the Indians were keeping close to their reservation, and the

* The negroes with Major Monkton having belonged to him in slavery days, and clung to him in his wanderings afterward, had never dropped the habit of calling him massa, as many of the colored people of the South still do with their old masters.

Red Angels had not been seen or heard of for some weeks.

Broncho Bill had returned to his ranch, Night Hawk had gone back to scouting, and Frank Powell was devoting himself to looking after the sick of the fort each morning, and taking the afternoon for a ride to Prairie Rest Ranch, returning to his quarters at the post when the night was half gone, and thus being hours of the day and night in the saddle between his dwelling-place and that of Janette.

The officers joked him upon his devotion to Janette, but he took it in his usual gentle way, and still continued his pilgrimages, keeping one horse at the ranch and another at the fort, so that he did not work them too hard.

One afternoon, as Janette started out upon the prairie for a gallop, hoping to meet the Doctor, she saw a horseman coming toward her, whom she at first belived to be the surgeon.

But, as he drew nearer, she saw that it was not Frank Powell.

He was a man of striking appearance, she noticed as he drew nearer, sat his horse with an easy grace that showed he was perfectly at home in the saddle, and the animal he be strode was certainly one possessing most admirable points in a horseman's eye.

The stranger was tall, slenderly formed, but with a breadth of shoulder denoting great physical strength, and his dress was a velvet jacket, beaded leggings, cavalry boots, and a black sombrero.

His face was colorless, though bronzed by exposure, and his features were strong, well molded, and full of expression, his eyes being particularly fine and full of dancing light that lent a sunny look to his face.

His saddle, trappings and bridle were richly mounted with silver, and his arms, a repeating rifle slung to his saddle-horn, and a pair of revolvers, were richly mounted and of the best workmanship.

The whole contour of the man was attractive, his face winning and inviting confidence, and one not to forget when once seen.

"It is the major's nephew," muttered Janette, "for he answers the description he gave me of him."

As the two drew near to each other the man raised his sombrero from his head, and said politely:

"May I ask, lady, if yonder is not the Monkton Ranch?"

Janette made no reply, but sat upon her horse staring straight into the face of the man, while her eyes sparkled and her bosom heaved.

An instant she sat thus, and then found voice.

"Are you not Paul Murdock?"

"Such is my name, lady, and must I be so rude as to say, though I know your face, I cannot recall where we have before met," he said, in a courtly way.

"Oh, Paul! you are indeed rude to forget little Janette Joslyn, your adopted sister," and she held forth her hands, and grasping them, he drew her toward him and kissed her, while he said:

"My dear little Janette! And this is you, grown into a woman, since last we met, for you were a little girl then."

"Yes, that was five years ago, when I was but twelve," and she sighed.

"Yes, but you were a noble little girl then, and I a willful, wild youth, who gave your good father, ay, my father, for such he was to me, so much trouble, and, I fear, caused him to lose his wealth; but I have changed since then, am a man now, and working hard to make a fortune to pay all back to my generous benefactor."

The man spoke with deep feeling, but something in the face of Janette checked him, while she said:

"Paul, father is dead."

"Dead! your father dead!" he fairly gasped.

"Yes, Paul."

"And what are you doing here, Janie, and—"

"Oh, Paul, it is a long, sad story."

"I knew that you speculated, and lost money, and that you left, determined that we should not hear from you until you had made a fortune."

"With the little that father had left he

came West to establish a home, for he had some little mining claim in Colorado, he hoped would some day be of value.

"On these prairies he was foully murdered by outlaws, the Red Angel band, of whom you have heard, and Heaven raised up to me kind friends, and an adopted father in the owner of yonder ranch."

"What! Major Monkton?"

"Yes."

"He is my uncle, Janette; my mother was his sister."

"Indeed, I had half suspected it when I saw you coming; but he always spoke of you as Paul, and I never heard the name of Murdock, so did not connect his Paul with my Paul."

"Oh, Janie, this is sad news that you tell me of your father."

"Sad, indeed, Paul."

"But how strange that we should meet again as we have, and my lucky star certainly sent me here."

"I roamed in Texas, wandered to Colorado, and then, with my earnings, bought a ranch in Kansas, but not liking it, brought cattle, cowboys and baggage up here, and have settled twenty miles above on the river, where I have been building a house for the past five weeks, and only to-day found time to return my uncle Monkton's visit."

"I am not rich, Janie, but I have a couple of sections of land, a few hundred head of cattle, some horses, and a thousand or two in money, and all is yours."

"No, no, Paul, do not say that, for father left me a few thousands which the major has invested in land and cattle, so I am rich, you see."

"But come with me, for I see a gentleman coming whom I wish you to meet."

"Who is it, Janie?"

"His name is Doctor Frank Powell, and he is a surgeon at the fort, while he is known on the border as the Wizard Doctor, the Surgeon Scout, Fancy Frank, and the Dead Shot Doctor, his daring deeds having won for him these names."

"I have heard of him."

"Yes, he is famous all along the border."

"You seem to think most kindly of him, Janie?"

"And I have reason to, Paul, for I owe my life and all to him."

"Come, let us meet him."

They rode forward and soon met the Surgeon Scout, who seemed a little surprised to find Janette with an escort.

But they grasped hands warmly at the introduction, while Janette said, in her sweet way:

"Now, Doctor Frank, I want you and Paul to be the best of friends, for he was my boy brother, and I love him dearly."

"And you certainly have a claim upon the Doctor, too, Janie, after all you owe him," said the young ranchero, with a smile.

"Yes, Paul, I have given Doctor Powell the right to claim me as his wife some day," was the frank response.

"He deserves you, Janie, and I feel will make you happy; if not, his face belies him."

"Thank you, Mr. Murdock, for your kind words; but come, I see the major, yonder, so let us ride over and join him," said the Doctor, and, with an escort upon either side, Janette Joslyn rode back to Prairie Rest Ranch, her heart full of happiness at again meeting the one she had called by the sweet name of brother when she was a wee girl in her Eastern home.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE PROMISE.

If there were those at the fort who envied Frank Powell the treasure he was to possess in Janette Joslyn, there were none so despicable as to say that he had not faithfully won the prize, and deserved her love with her hand.

An ardent, devoted lover he certainly was, and whenever duty did not keep him at his post, he was taking the long, dangerous ride over to Monkton Ranch.

The Sioux had again become a trifle troublesome, having made several raids down into the neighborhood of the ranches about the fort, so it was necessary to be on the alert, and both the Doctor and Night Hawk

were off on scouts whenever opportunity offered, hoping to prevent any surprise either to the fort or the rancheros.

The Red Angels had also appeared of late on the trails, striking an emigrant train here, and a Government train with supplies there, and Captain Burt, with a large force, had been on their track.

The Overland stage had also been halted and robbed several times by Captain Kit, and altogether affairs were not as happy as they might have been.

Over at Prairie Rest Ranch all was going well, for Major Monkton was a good manager, and not only a cattle-man, but a farmer, and his negro help, devoted to him as they were, worked hard for his interest, which they knew was also for their own good.

Janette had made of the large cabin a most comfortable home, for curtains hung at the windows, rag carpets, made by old Aunt Phoebe and herself, covered the floors, pencil sketches and paintings, her own work, hung on the walls, and without the yard began to be dotted with flower-beds, the walks were sanded to prevent mud, and the cabin had put on a gala look under a dress of white-wash.

Alive to the danger they were in, the major had strengthened his stockade walls, and otherwise protected the place, so that he could drive his cattle in pens and stand a state of siege for a long time if it came to it.

In all this Frank Powell had been his adviser and aid, and having prepared for war, both Major Monkton and the surgeon had lifted a load of dread from their hearts.

Other rancheros having also strengthened their homes, and added to their number of cowboys, it was hoped the Indians would be wary about coming in that vicinity, where they might expect a warm reception.

At Murdock's Ranch, twenty miles distant from the major's, great improvements had gone on, for the industrious young ranchero and his half-dozen cowboys had worked night and day to build their home.

A cabin, almost a fort in strength, had been erected upon a lawn that sloped to the river, and upon the banks of the stream stockade walls and pens had been built for the cattle and for defense.

The major and Janette had paid several visits to Paul Murdock, and were delighted with his home, and, in the midst of his work he would steal time twice a week to run down to Monkton Ranch.

At first Frank Powell seemed inclined to be a trifle jealous of the handsome young ranchero, but such a feeling quickly vanished, and the two became devoted friends.

One night, as the surgeon was bidding Janette farewell, when about to start on his long ride back to the fort, she said earnestly: "Oh, Frank, I so fear to have you go."

"I do wish you did not have to so place your life in danger."

"You have but to say the word, Janette, and the danger ends," was the low reply.

"But what shall I say?"

"Say that you will become my wife within the week, and I will resign from the army, come here to live, as the major wishes me to, and care for his place."

"Will you, Janette?"

"Yes," she said, softly.

"To-day week?"

"It will be Friday."

"What of that, my little one?"

"It is a day of bad luck."

"Nonsense! do not let superstition rule you, my child."

"Then I will say Friday."

And thus it was arranged that one week from that night Janette Joslyn was to become the wife of Frank Powell, the Surgeon Scout.

CHAPTER LV.

THE STOLEN BRIDE.

WHEN it became known at the fort that Frank Powell and Janette were going to be married, all determined that they should have as grand a welcome as it was possible for them to receive in that frontier post, for it was decided that the fair bride should come to the post to dwell, until another surgeon could be appointed in the stead of the one who was to leave them, and whom they so hated to give up.

The Doctor was the more anxious for this, as the Sioux were becoming most threatening, and he knew that at the fort she would certainly be safe, while, as he would not neglect his duties at his post, he would be half the time away from the ranch.

There was also an anxiety in the heart of Frank Powell about the Red Angels, for both himself and Night Hawk had seen strange trails about Prairie Rest Ranch, which their united skill in prairie craft could not trace to an end.

Remembering the urgent desire of Captain Kit to get possession of Janette, it gave him an anxiety he was most desirous should end by having her safe in the fort.

On account of the troubles brewing, the constant fear of an Indian raid, and the smallness of the force at the garrison, it was decided that there should be only the simple ceremony at the Prairie Rest Ranch, and a reception given at the fort to a couple, when they came to reside there, after a few days of the honeymoon passed in the society of the major.

The fact was, the officers were afraid to leave the fort in numbers, and so Frank Powell rode over to Monkton Ranch, with the chaplain, Lieutenant Ames and Night Hawk only, the young officer and his brother intending to act as his groomsmen.

The major received them warmly, as did also Paul Murdock, who had just ridden down from his ranch.

The negroes were radiant with smiles, and old Aunt Phoebe had done her best in the way of a wedding-supper.

The afternoon passed away pleasantly, the supper was enjoyed by all, and then the lamps were lit, and all congregated in the large sitting room to see the young girl take upon herself the duties of a wife to the brave, strong man at her side.

Dressed with exquisite taste, Janette looked most beautiful, and so womanly did she appear that no one would have suspected her of being a mere girl, not yet across the threshold of eighteen years.

The surgeon looked grandly handsome in a new uniform, and a bright light of joy rested upon his intelligent, handsome face, so full of power, and with the heart reflected in every feature.

Night Hawk was attired in a full suit of buckskin, just such a one as Red Flower, the wanted-to-be Indian bride, might have made for him, had he been willing to give her the chance, while the major, Paul Murdock, and Lieutenant Ames were in their "Sundays" for the occasion.

The negroes were grouped about, all in their best clothing and happiest smiles, and the wish of one and all seemed to be for the happiness of those two, who were linking their lives together "for better or worse."

In his solemn tones the chaplain read the ceremony which made Janette Joslyn the wife of Surgeon Frank Powell, and then followed warm congratulations on all sides.

Hardly had the last wish for happiness been uttered, when Zip came in hastily and said:

"Doctor, a courier has arrived from the fort, and wants you, sah."

"What is it, my man— Ho, Kendrick, it is you?"

"Quick, tell me what has happened?" said Doctor Powell, recognizing the soldier as he appeared in the door.

"Captain Burt, sir, has been badly wounded—"

"Ha! have the Indians attacked the fort?"

"Oh, no, sir; he was shot accidentally, and I was dispatched at once for you."

"I will go at once," and after a hasty farewell to his beautiful bride, Frank Powell mounted his horse, and, accompanied by Night Hawk, the lieutenant and the chaplain, rode off at full speed, the courier, after receiving a fresh mount from the major, following.

While the negroes were enjoying the wedding-supper, the major and Paul sat talking with Janette, who spoke of the many noble qualities of the wounded officer, and all hoped the great skill of Frank Powell would be able to save him.

An hour had passed after the departure of the bridegroom and his friends, when the tramp of hoofs was heard without, and Zip again appeared.

"Well, Zip, what is it?" asked the major.

"The courier, sah."

As the negro spoke, Kendrick, the courier, again appeared in the doorway.

Saluting politely, he said:

"This time I come for Mrs. Powell, for we met a squad of troopers, and Surgeon Powell sent me back with them for you, lady, for they report that there is a large band of Indians on the march northward."

This was an alarming piece of news, and Paul Murdock said:

"I will see you off, Janie, and then will ride home, for I must be on my guard, and you, too, uncle Monkton."

"Yes, my boy, there is trouble brewing, I fear, and I shall be glad to have Janette in a stronger fort than my ranch."

"Good-by, my child, and expect to have me to see you soon."

With tears in her eyes Janette bade farewell to the good ranchero, and to Paul Murdock, and then grasped the hand of each one of the negroes that crowded about her with every wish for her happiness.

On their horses sat six cavalymen, awaiting, while Kendrick stood by the side of her horse.

Lifting her to her saddle, Paul Murdock lifted his hat, and she dashed away, with Kendrick leading, and the soldiers following.

"Now, uncle, I'll say good-night, and trust matters may not prove to be as bad as they look," and Paul Murdock departed, leaving Major Monkton alone in his ranch, as before Janette had brought sunshine to it by her presence.

With the black cowboys on the watch the night wore away and morning came.

Then, as soon as it grew light, Zip spied a single horseman riding furiously across the prairie.

His horse was seen to be covered with foam, and his face was almost deathlike as he threw himself from his saddle and cried:

"Major, for God's sake tell me if my wife is here?"

"Good God, Powell, has anything happened?"

"Yes, for I reached the fort to find that Burt had not been wounded, and that Kendrick, the courier, had deserted day before yesterday."

"Powell! that man came here, an hour after your departure, and with him were six cavalymen."

"He said you had sent them as an escort for Janette to the fort."

"Oh, God, have mercy!" and the words came in a groan of anguish, wrung from the torn heart of the brave man.

Staggering to a seat on the porch of the cabin, he continued:

"Major Monkton, that man deserted and joined the outlaws."

"Those men were not soldiers, but Red Angels, and my little Janette has been stolen by that fiend incarnate, Captain Hyena."

"But I will track him to his death for this, mark my words!"

The major had never seen Frank Powell so excited before as he was when he spoke the first few words.

But with the last he had become perfectly calm, painfully calm in fact.

"Come into the house, Powell."

"I will, for George is coming behind me, with Ames and a number of cavalymen, and we will strike the trail of those devils, and follow it to the bitter end, yes, follow it, if I have to go alone."

CHAPTER LVI.

THE DUEL TO THE DEATH.

FOUR men were riding along over a rough country, one afternoon, a year perhaps after the kidnapping of Janette Powell by the Red Angels.

The horses looked as though they had been pressed hard, and the faces of three of them were haggard, while the fourth wore a mask.

It was the mask of wings that so long had concealed the face of Captain Kit, the Red Angel chief.

"Once we can reach the railway, Kendrick, we will be safe from that demon upon our trail," said the masked man.

"Yes, but it is yet an all-day journey off," answered the man addressed, and who was

none other than the deserter courier that had kidnapped Janette.

"But he is yet a long way behind us," said a third, while the fourth remarked:

"Pards, I think we are showing cursed cowardice in running from one man, as we have been doing, ever since we heard he was in the mines hunting us."

"Cowardice or not, I feel that when we face that man, although he is but one, and we are four, we die."

"I tell you, boys, I am superstitious, and I believe in dreams, and I have dreamt that I died by his hand."

"I wronged him deeply, as you know, and as you did, too, who aided me, and look at the result."

"He has tracked us like a bloodhound, he drove us from the prairies to the mines, he scented us out there, and he has given us no rest."

"We believed we were safe back in that settlement, and yet you, Kendrick, saw him ride in there two nights ago, and I know he took our trail at daylight, and has been gaining on us ever since."

"If I reach the railway I shall go East, for he'll never dream I have gone there," and the masked man spoke with the deepest feeling.

So on they rode, mile after mile, their horses staggering with fatigue, until at last the Red Angel chief said:

"Pards, we must halt, or our horses will drop."

"All right, cap'n, we can go into camp, but build no fire, and munch our food in darkness."

A suitable place was soon found, the horses were watered at a brook near by and staked out, and the men spread their blankets and sat down to eat their cold supper.

They were wretched without a doubt, for the man upon their track had unnerved them, and one of the party, he who had before spoken against their running from one man, now said:

"Pards, ef yer hasn't lost yer grip entire, I moves that yer right heur take ther advise I hes so often give yer."

"What is that, Dead Knife Jim?" asked Captain Kit, impatiently.

"Ter ambush him."

"No, it might fail, and then it will bring matters to a climax."

"It won't fail, cap'n, ef yer stands by me."

"How do you mean, Jim?"

"I means that I will go back on our trail, to a spot I seen back yonder, whar I kin knock him over beautiful."

"Well, well?" eagerly said all.

"Waal, I'll go back thar in ther mornin', jist as soon as it gits toward light, an' place myself."

"You kin stay here."

"Yes."

"He hes got ter come by thar, following our trail, and he hes got ter come within three yards o' me."

"Well?"

"He'll find me thar, ef I dies fer it, as I is tired of this kind o' skeery biz."

"And you will kill him?"

"Now you jist bet he won't kill me, Pard Cap'n."

"Well, Dead Knife, to end the suspense, I say do it, and we will wait for you here."

"If you kill him, I will make you my pard in that Colorado mine."

"Done, cap'n; now let us get some sleep, so my narve kin be steady."

"But if you should not kill him, Jim?"

"Waal, thet will be bad."

"Kinder so," said one.

"For us," remarked another.

"It will be our death; but the suspense must end, so do as you think best, Jim," said the captain of the Red Angels.

Then they laid down to sleep, and the hours of darkness wore on; but before dawn Dead Knife Jim was stirring, and his anxious comrades got up too.

"I'm off, pards."

"Luck, Jim!"

"Yas, get ther drop."

"Kill him! make no mistake!" savagely said the chief.

Then Dead Knife Jim rode back on the trail.

He had gone about half a mile when he came to a halt and dismounted.

Letting his horse feed, he quietly sat down on a rock and began to pick his teeth with his bowie-knife.

"Thar he comes! soon ther agony are over," he said, coolly, as a horseman appeared in sight.

That horseman was Frank Powell, stern-faced, sad-faced, haggard and determined.

Seeing Dead Knife he rode up to him, neither showing hostile intent.

"Well, Jim?"

"They is half a mile up thar, waiting for me, as I tole 'em I was coming back to kill you."

"Jim, you have been my friend."

"If I die, my horse, arms, and money about me I leave to you, and you must tell my brothers how I died."

"You have aided me all this long time in tracking those devils, and now the end must come."

So saying Frank Powell rode on, while Dead Knife Jim mounted his horse and followed, remarking:

"I'll be thar at ther cirkis, I guesses."

Approaching the spot where the Red Angels were waiting, Frank Powell settled himself in his saddle, drew a revolver, and with a wild yell that went echoing through the hills, spurred forward.

That terrible war-cry gave the Red Angels warning, as he intended it should, and they sprung to their feet in wild alarm, drawing their revolvers, and trying to find cover.

But the avenger was upon them, and though their bullets rattled around him, he seemed to bear a charmed life.

Once he fired, and Kendrick fell dead.

Twice he fired, and a second man died in his tracks.

A third time he fired, and the Red Angel chief staggered backward.

Ere he could fall Frank Powell had thrown himself from his horse and grasped him with one hand, while with the other he tore the red-wing mask from his face, hissing forth as he did so:

"Now tell me, Paul Murdock, where is my wife?"

"Dead to you forever," came the gasping words, and Powell threw the body from him, for the spirit of the man who had so wronged him had fled.

CONCLUSION.

YEARS have gone by since that desperate duel to the death, in the wilds of Colorado, kind reader, when Frank Powell tracked to the bitter end those who had blighted his life, and righted the wrong they had done him.

The prairie where is laid the early scenes of my story is now no longer raided by the savage Sioux, nor do the Red Angels of the Overland demand toll there as of yore, for smiling farms dot the plains, and the old fort has gone to ruin almost, as there is no need there for brave boys in blue to protect the settlers.

Many of those who have figured in my story have passed away, and the gallant officers who loved Janette hold high rank now, and some of them have married and forgotten their first love.

As for poor Janette, from the night on which she was stolen from him, Frank Powell never saw her again, and over her life the man who loved her has let the curtain of compassion fall, for he knows that she had proved false to him and true to Paul Murdock who had won her heart as a girl.

In a mining-town in Colorado Dead Knife Jim now dwells, and is living the honest life of a constable.

As for my heroes, the Powell brothers, they are living in a Western town, practicing medicine, and honored members of society, for they have given up forever the wild life they led upon the border in the days of the Red Angels of the Overland.

THE END.

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